



Toil-drilled Sandies of the Range.

Stories and Sermons

BY

BUCKSKIN BRADY

The Cowboy Evangelist



Toronto

WILLIAM BRIGGS

1901



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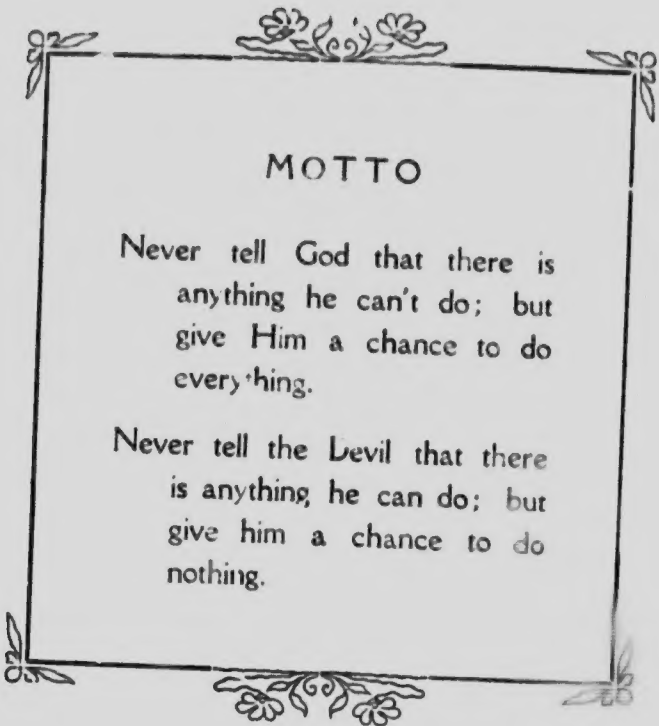


Toronto

WILLIAM BRIGGS

1905

Entered according to Act of the Parliament of Canada, in the year
one thousand nine hundred and five, by BEA HOLLBROOK-WILLIAMS,
at the Department of Agriculture.

A decorative rectangular border with floral motifs at the top, bottom, and corners. The top and bottom center features a symmetrical floral design, while the corners have small, stylized floral ornaments.

MOTTO

Never tell God that there is
anything he can't do; but
give Him a chance to do
everything.

Never tell the Devil that there
is anything he can do; but
give him a chance to do
nothing.

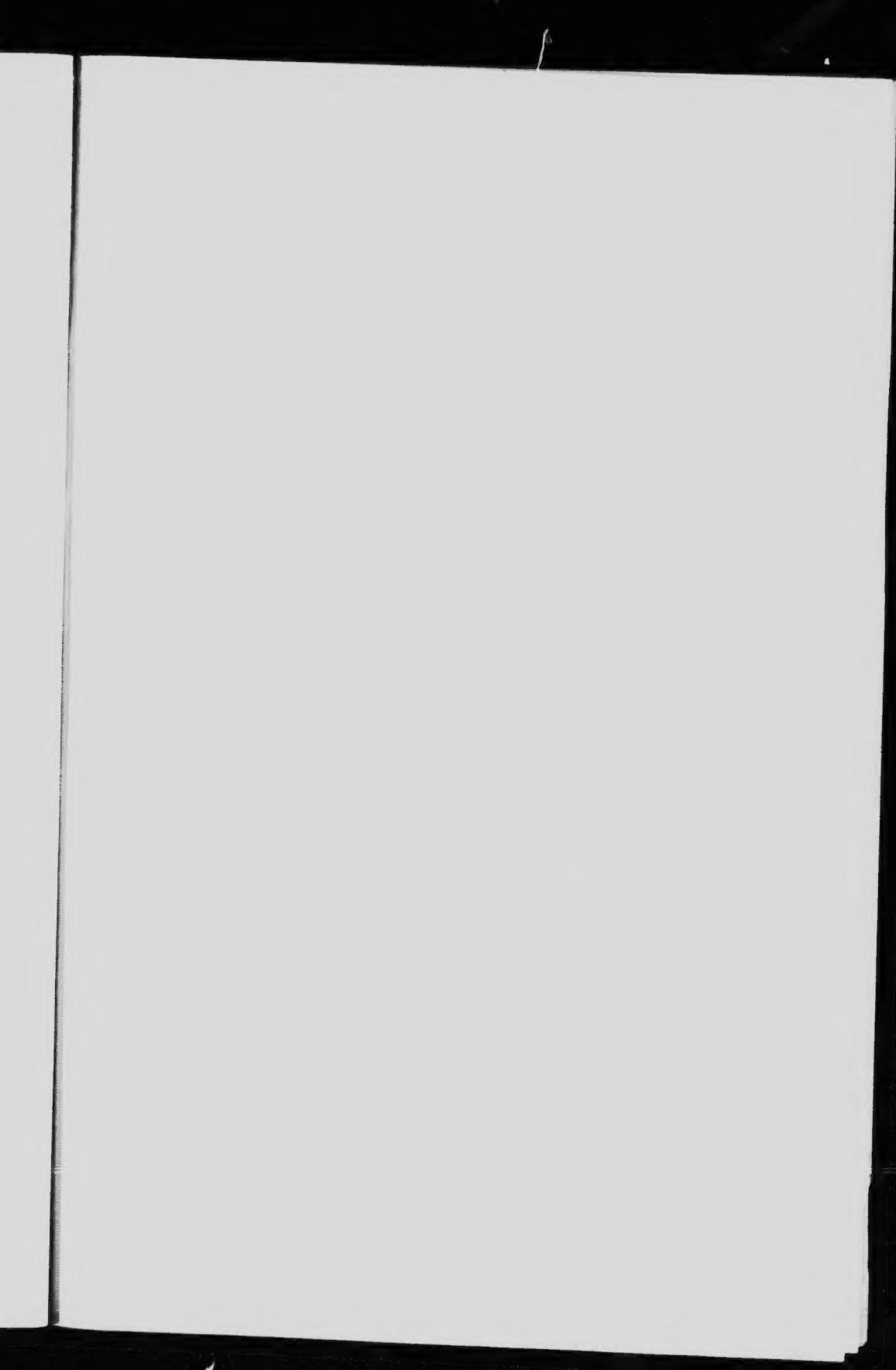
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Ranch Cattle Coming up Ravine.

STORIES AND SERMONS

CHAPTER I.

EXPERIENCE OF A CONVERTED COWBOY.

WHEN at the age of eight I packed my war-bag and started out to establish my reputation as a professional cowboy. It was because of my father's death at New York, where I was born—together with other misfortunes—that placed me at the head of the family. Besides, we located in the heart of a cow range, and there was no other work that a boy could get. So the same circumstances that leads so many boys of the city to sweat their bread out in the factory threw the little frontier lad on his own resource, and I became a cowboy through force of circumstances rather than from choice of profession.

Mother started me out with a prayer; this, together with a Bible, an arithmetic and the loan of a pony from a friend, constituted my entire outfit. I now felt pretty well equipped for taking the rough corners off the old world.

So I tackled my first job as cowboy at close herding a bunch of cattle on the Sioux Indian Reservation,

where, almost wholly removed from the influences of home and school, I spent my boyhood.

Surrounded by the wild, rough range life, with little Indian boys for playmates, I was allowed to grow up almost as free from restraint as an elk of the bad land.

It was a pretty wild sea for a light-rigged vessel. Several times the storms nearly swamped my little hull, but I purposed navigating my own boat. I took points for the right port before I set sail by making my Bible and arithmetic chart and compass for the voyage. I studied them so well that I sailed right through everything and kept my bearings. Every day I studied my Bible to keep square with the world, and every day I studied my arithmetic to keep the world square with me.

My pony, undertaking the scientific part of my training, gave me regular lessons in side drills, and was so expert at the business that, in a short time, I learned to walk long distances at a brisk pace. These exercises put brawn in my muscle and fire in my bones.

I was so regular in my lessons that the ambitious little horse lived to see me take out a diploma and receive a degree that even he was willing to accept as an authority on side drills, and learned to reverence me as the celebrated broncho twister who never gets the "horse laugh."

The Bible gave me a character which distinguished me amongst the profession as "the prayin' kid." a title

which I have always striven to maintain through more than twenty years of frontier life, though the kid has grown till his whiskers have borne the dignity of royal manhood.

With few diversions, I clung to the saddle. The camp became the place where I ate, slept and received my schooling; and for years I sang my songs and whistled my tunes to the beat of hoofs and the jingling of spurs.

I have crossed the wild Sioux's trail when he was in his war paint and his smoke smelled of blood. I have helped to trail the herd from the Rockies to the Big Missouri, when the drive would fill in three months of hard double drilling and regular night guards, under every exposure imaginable and excruciating hardships, where sleep was taken in our boots and Sunday never came.

Sometimes ugly rivers were crossed under circumstances which threatened our lives, or the roaring stampede tore the midnight with wild rides where washouts and rocks threatened to swamp us under clashing hoofs.

I will remember a time when I could have told you the best way to : a country into circles for fast work, for I have ped to round up the stock range of three states.

In those days I could take a few men and split a piece of bad lands up in a way that would shake all the cattle out of it, and gather them in a bunch in some convenient flat, ready for rope and branding

iron, where the hold-up and branding would move on like a piece of machinery, every man doing his part, from the man who handles the rope down to the calf wrestler. It was a wild, free life, every day filled up with daring rides and thrilling adventures. I have had enough hairbreadth escapes from hoofs and horns to furnish weaving material for a preacher's suit—Prince Albert and all—and I don't see how I have escaped the call so many times, else it be that God has ordained me to wear the Prince Albert myself. (I mean the square cut).

The chart and compass that guided my craft through all these years is the hand and Word of God.

The solitude of mountains, plains, and br ' lands, with all their herds of range cattle and horses and bands of wild game, was an index to the life and liberty of God's omnipotent love, by which He taught me to read the mysteries of His wonderful creation.

Nature was an open book from which I read the signs of the times. I meditated upon God and His Word, and studied His laws till solitude, with all her sights, sounds, and colors, has woven herself into every fibre of soul and body, and till God speaks to me from every rock, and tree, and creature.

Often I have followed some wild, lonely trail through bad land blowouts or deep, rocky, mountain passes as my brone, rolling the dust clouds back from his nimble heels, rocked my dreamy fancy into many a romance of God and nature: while the rocks, trees,

and creatures wove themselves into my imagination as my thoughts ascended to God in prayer.

Sometimes, as I thought of the agonies of damned souls writhing in endless punishment and of God's wonderful love and compassion, the rocks and trees would represent men to me, and I would tell them of the blood-bought salvation which is free to all.

God's Spirit took such a dealing with me, as He gradually led my mind out on the work for which He was preparing me, that often I've been so burdened with the salvation of souls that a few scraggy pines on the brink of some deep rocky canyon would so suggest the dangers of that awful hell into which my comrades were drifting that I would dismount, tie my horse by the wayside, and pour my heart out to God for their salvation. At certain times I would select a text, and when I could get no other audience, I would go down into some deep canyon and preach a sermon to the rocks and trees. One time, after an effort of this kind, God so manifested Himself to me that the old canyon seemed to blaze with light and glory.

I had enjoyed many blessed seasons with God; had known His power to save and keep; had helped some of my comrades into the light and liberty of His saving grace; yet I had allowed the responsibility of kinsfolk to keep me from sounding the message abroad. But at last the call became imperative. It was like a mighty thunderbolt, tearing me loose from the world and all around me, snapping all other

responsibilities like a thread, while an invisible power caught me up into a higher life. I had been made party to a transaction high above myself, one in which my authority took no part. It was as though my hand were fixed in that of God. There seemed no recourse, and I sought none.

Although I had accumulated property enough to establish a ranch and maintain a comfortable home, yet I felt as if I were a beggar. Property lost its power to satisfy; the wild, free life lost its charms, and solitude became a reproach. The once friendly old canyons, with their wild, fascinating scenery—the haunts of a life—now seemed yawning pits; their rocks, trees and shrubs seemed like so many processions of lost souls winding their way down to hell hand-in-hand, bringing to mind the expressions of despondency I had seen on so many hopeless faces.

Suddenly the burden of unsaved souls seemed to be crushing the very life out of me, and, feeling as helpless as a bruised reed broken with the wind, I prayed for relief, when like a flash a sense of divine power came pouring into my heart, pervading my whole being, and thrilling every fibre of my nature with the white light of God's glory. For days the sense of divine power in my heart was so strong that I left off eating and sleeping to feast on God, while the country where I rode seemed hallowed ground, and the atmosphere sweet and mellow with the breath of heaven.

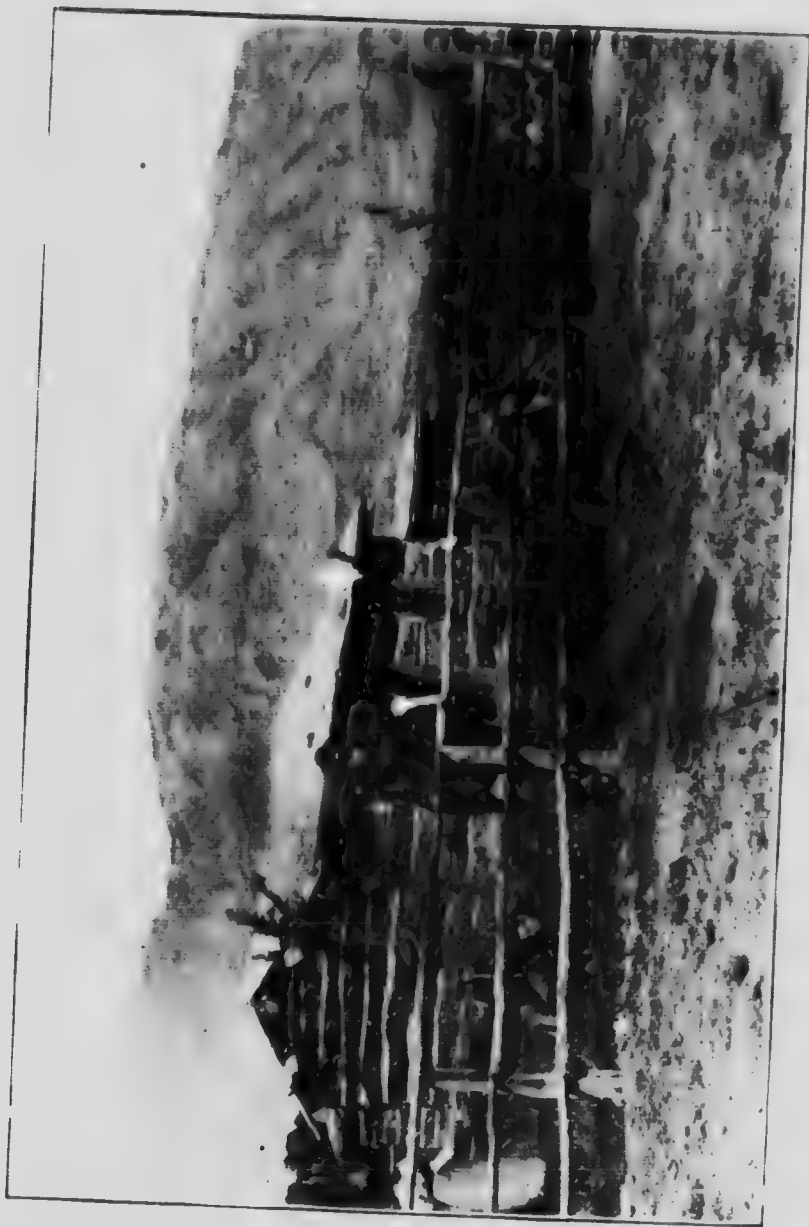
Things became changed again. The grand old

canyons became as fair as Beulah Land; the rocks and trees like celestial bodies shining with Divine glories; while the birds, catching the music of my heart, sang till the air seemed filled with seraphic melody. "The wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing."

My nature, mellowed by the Spirit of God through constant, active association with His wonderful creation, and made susceptible to His best and highest influences, has, somehow, absorbed the best expressions of all He has shown me of man and solitude. There is a place in my thoughts where God and nature meet—the natural and Divine—to blend in perfect harmony. All the romantic influence of solitude still in my nature is constantly exerting itself in thought, word and prayer as I endeavor, by the power of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, to express His wonderful love to mankind.

I never expect to outgrow the influences of the wild, rough life of the range, but God has sanctified them to His service. God has blessed this poor, unworthy cowboy till the same preaching that once made the trees and canyons ring now moves the hearts of men to seek their God. My old outfit is now gone—saddle, spurs, brone, and all—but, like Peter's net and fishing-boat, we don't need them in this business. I can ride the devil without saddle or spurs; and the sleek, bad land steer doesn't grease

his heel to dodge my rope now, because God has spread the loop to catch men. Why should I not be happy? Led by the Spirit; saved by His grace; sanctified through His blood; filled with all the fulness of God; desirous to know the fellowship of His sufferings; qualified to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ--this is my education, my qualification, my ordination.



Leaving the Old Home.

CHAPTER II.

ME, MY DOG, AND THE GERMAN.

"My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king."—*David.*

I WAS only a bit of a lad when I packed my bed and war-bag, put my Bible into my pocket, shook hands with my friends, and gave a farewell look at the old home on the White River Range as I rode away, hitting the long, hard trail that leads west across the big South Dakota plains and Cheyenne bad lands into the wilds of Wyoming, where I crossed a branch of the Rockies, and at the end of six weeks pulled up in the Great Basin of the Big Horn, six hundred miles away. It was in the heat of summer, when alkali dust was thick and dry camping so frequent that the exposure and hardships of the trip made me as brown and wrinkled as a Tartar of the desert, and anyone might have thought, as I pulled up in front of the ranch and asked the foreman, "How 'bout gittin' work in this outfit?" that the sixteen-year-old lad was a veteran cow-chaser.

The foreman was a witty old Irishman, with deep gray eyes, a chew of tobacco, and a joke, who had been an Indian scout under General O. O. Howard

in his expedition against Sitting Bull in early days, and had a wide reputation on the frontier for his daring energy, both as scout and cowboy. After carefully sizing me up from my pack horses to my spurs, he replied: "Sposin' I'd give you a string of brones, and let you roll yer bed out with the boys, what could you do with a job of ridin'?" I jst allowed I could git 'bout as much ridin' out of a string of horses as the next man when it came down to chasin' cows. So he concluded to give me a trial.

I unpacked my bed and war-bag, turned my broncho over to the horse wrangler for safe-keeping, threw my saddle on to a Company horse, and started around circle with the other boys, under the name of "The Dakota Kid."

I was the youngest in the outfit, and the only Christian cowboy heard of in those parts. Back on my home range, where I had ridden for years and everyone knew me, my religion was allowed by all as a unique characteristic, and passed everywhere as a compliment to the profession; but here things were different, for no one knew me.

When the boys learned that I was carrying a Bible in my pocket and reading and praying, they looked upon me as a kind of freak or natural curiosity, and made up their minds that if this was what people called religion, now was the time to sample it. Not that they had anything against me as a cow-chaser, but they thought that it would be a good thing, since I had come amongst them as a Christian, to try my

religion, just to see if there was anything in it. So they went through a series of cowboy manoeuvres which resulted in each of them sending in his order by a special management under the supervision of his majesty the devil.

They watched me reading my Bible for a time, and saw that I did quite a bit of praying; then they began to give me new nicknames, such as "Buckskin Lazarus," "Deacon Brady," "Sky Pilot Kid," etc. Sometimes they put on mimic faces and asked grace.

The foreman said that he was interested in religion, too, and allowed that if there was any of it running loose 'bout camp he'd give a bid on it. So, when a tough horse hit the outfit, old Mike 'd say: "Wal, Deacon, ain't any of us fellers ready to die yet. You're saved, you know, and it won't matter whether you get killed or not; so you can put yer saddle on and we'll see how you look up 'mong the stars. See?"

And I was saved, too, for God had not only saved my soul from every snare of the devil, but He was continually saving my poor bones from the treachery of vicious horses and wicked men.

I was always ready to ride up to orders, and at the word met all Mike's tests; so, during the first few months in his outfit, my saddle was cinched on some of the hardest horses in the country. But it didn't matter how vicious the horse was, how hard and fast he hit the earth, how many kinks he put in his jumps, I used to sit up there as though I had grown fast to him; and no matter how high and crooked he went

I managed to keep him between me and the earth, always returning with him in good shape. So, with all their cunning, old Mike and his crew never got to see how I looked up amongst the stars.

The Bible had come amongst them to stay, and God, who never sends a man out on an excursion without furnishing him with a round-trip ticket and seeing that he doesn't get left at any of side stations, was faithful in backing His part of the contract.

Then, again, on the round-up Mike 'd give me the very hardes' circle. He used to say, "Wal, Deacon, we'll give y. this circle to-day, bein' as it's the toughest. You're a good Christian, you know, so if yer horse plays out you can ride in on yer religion. See? The other boys ain't got any, and it'd be too bad for them to git left in the bad lands."

Then I would take the circle. Many a time I have ridden my religion into camp at the close of a long, hard day, trailing my fagged-out broncho along at the end of the bridle-reins. I have ridden a great many good horses, but I have never struck one yet that could outride my religion.

In dark, stormy weather, when the beef herd was restless and hard to hold, it was necessary for some of us to do double night guard. Old Mike 'd say: "Wal, Deacon, I'm mighty glad we've got a good Christian in our outfit to-night, 'cause it's pretty lonesome out there under them clouds, and some of us'll have to stay with the cattle all night. The other boys ain't got any one to talk to, so I guess we'll give you

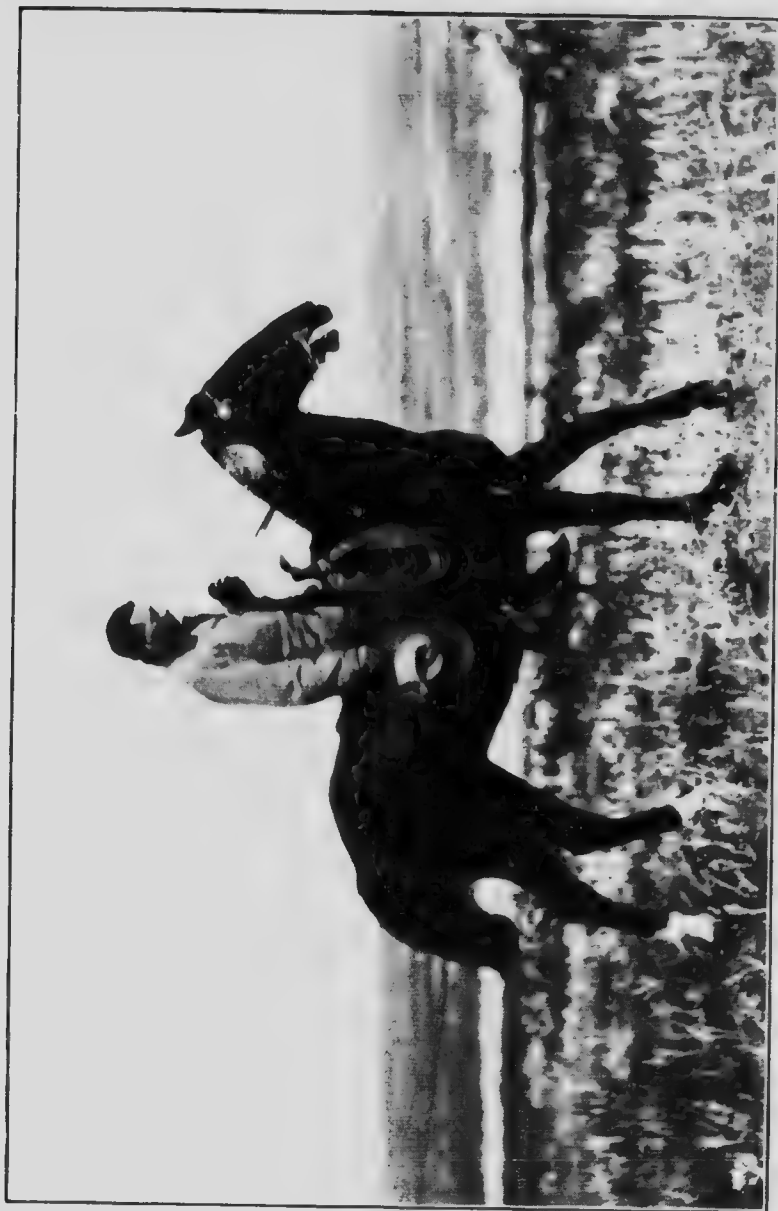
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Looking for Trail Signs.

that job, 'cause if you get lonesome you can talk to the Lord. See?"

In a few weeks Mike got orders to throw the beef steers up on the Big Horn Mountains to fatten for fall market, and leave a man to line ride them.

It was a lonely job. So Mike said: "Wal, Deacon, the other boys won't have this job 'cause it's too lonesome for them. I can't spare only one man for the work, so I guess we'll give it to you. If God takes as much interest in you as you say He does, why you might invite Him down to spend a day or so with you once in a while to talk things over. You can tell Him that you're working for one of the toughest sandies that ever topped a horse. Maybe you can git Him to take a little interest in me, too. If He pays any attention to my case at all, tell Him that I'll order a Bible and we'll be a pair. See?"

So we threw the stock up on the mountains. Mike outfitted me with a little canvas wigwam, a month's grub stake, packed up a quantity of rock salt for the cattle and left me alone to mind them. As far as I knew there was no one nearer than thirty-five miles.

My work was to examine the trails each day to keep the cattle inside the circle line, and if any of them should get across and strayed down the mountain to trail them up and drive them back again. This system of herding, called line riding, gives the cattle great freedom, as they need never be driven about or molested night or day, so long as they keep inside the circle line.

The mountain was beautiful with fruits, ferns and flowers, and the rocks, trees and canyons were strewn about in all sorts of romantic shapes and colors, giving the landscape a pleasing variety at every turn.

I picked out a suitable camp ground just above a spring branch in a clump of pines along the edge of a wooded canyon, staked my little tent, scooped out a place for my camp fire, and brought a pail of water from the spring branch. While my dinner was cooking I sized things up again, and found that the tent was large enough to hold my grub, bed, war-bag and riding outfit, too, in case of storm. As I liked sleeping in open air best in pleasant weather, I made my bed of spruce boughs, covered with moss, under a big pine.

After everything was settled and dinner over, I saddled my horse and started on the circle, which was about ten miles around, in order to get acquainted with the hard ground and count the trails. I found only three trails where the cattle would be likely to stray out, the rest of the way being fairly well fenced with impassable canyons and rocky cliffs.

After the herd—which was made up of two thousand beef steers and three hundred horses—got acquainted with the new range, I figured that one circle a day, with the usual allowance for trouble, would hold them all right, leaving the prospect bright for a pleasant summer's work.

Old Mike had done me a great favor in giving me this lonely job, because it took me away from the confusion of men and devils, and left me alone with

God and nature to enjoy my thoughts in peace and quietness.

I hadn't seen a man for several weeks, till one day in trailing up a small band of cattle that a storm had drifted across the line I ran across a sheep camp, and the herder gave me a nice dog, which I brought home for company.

Shep was an intelligent dog of pure stock, and took such lively interest in camp life that I began his education at once. In a few days he learned to carry camp wood, round up my saddle horses and do many useful things. He liked to hear me read my Bible and sing. He took quite an interest in my religion, lying with his face on his paws and looking up at me out of the corner of his eye as wise looking as a tree-full of owls. I thought that I would see if I could give him a part in this exercise, too, and began to give him lessons in singing. He would sit at the opposite side of the camp fire with his paws over his face while I asked grace. Then I would sing a bit of a hymn, and he would bring in the chorus dog fashion, never failing to be on hand every meal with his part in the ceremony.

Every Sunday morning after returning from circle work I held gospel meetings down in the canyon, with the rocks, trees, and faithful old Shep for my audience. Shep was always as grave and dignified as if he realized the solemnity of the hour.

Once in a meeting of unusual interest Shep seemed more than ever impressed, and at the close of the

meeting, arising to his feet with the grave look of a judge and moving slowly forward, he put his head against my hand and whined in a peculiar manner, as though he had some very important confession or announcement to make. This was unusual conduct that I did not understand, but on turning to leave the ground was surprised to find one of the ranch hands—a big German—sitting on a rock behind me. The foreman had sent him up to see how it was going with me, and he had reached camp just in time for meeting.

I suppose the reason that old Shep hadn't raised an alarm was because he thought if the feller had come clear up the mountain to hear me preach that it would be rude to interrupt the service; so the German had been able to take his seat without attracting my attention.

He said that it was the first sermon he had heard for ten years, and asked me to preach again. He seemed so much in earnest that I made an appointment for another meeting the same night. The day was spent in pleasant conversation of the things of God, and a profitable time it was for both of us.

After supper, just as the twilight was deepening on the range of Rockies across the way, I read a few verses from the little book and announced the text, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," and asked God's blessing on our little meeting.



Deacon's Camp Partner.

The increased audience was an inspiration which I had not felt before. I was conscious of a present centre of sympathy in the German, which was eager to respond to every sentiment of God that I could feel or speak. This gave a new sweetness to the devotion, and made me forget, for the time, the solitude of rocks and trees. God's Spirit had begun His work in the heart of this man.

That night, as we lay gazing up at the stars and talking of the love of God, he told me that if I would preach again he would stay, so I thought the best thing I could do was to open a series of revival meetings. I did so. The German yielded his heart to God, who blessed him with a wonderful salvation; for God never loses an opportunity of blessing a man.

Here was a poor, rough cowboy who came to my camp on business little thinking of God or his soul's salvation. But God had so arranged things that he ran right into red-hot gospel meetings, and got salvation, which, I am sure, is the greatest blessing God can bestow upon man. The next day he hit the trail for home as happy as a lark, singing praises to God as he rode along.

In a few days afterwards I returned from circle work to find my convert back to camp with a fresh supply of grub, and a string of pack-horses loaded with rock salt for the cattle, and with word from the foreman that he was to camp with me. It was a beautiful plan, full of pleasant prospects, and I prepared to make the most of it. He was bright, cheer-

ful, full of fun, and a good camp rustler. He was always on hand with his part of the work. It didn't matter how long the ride or how stormy the way, he would come in at the finish of the circle in a humor that would make the old camp fairly shine. And we would both go about our work as merrily as a pair of larks in nesting season.

During the day we enjoyed our leisure hours in little excursions among the wooded canyons, planning to reach the cosiest nooks of moss and fern beds, where we had many blessed seasons of prayer and praises to God for His goodness to us. At night we read the Bible by the flickering light of the camp-fire, and sang our songs to the night winds.

As the days went by, and our studies grew more interesting, the German made up his mind that he, too, should have a Bible. This impression grew on him till his ambition knew no restraint. So early one morning he saddled his horse and started out to secure the coveted book.

Prior Mission, which was eighty miles distant, was the nearest station where Bibles could be bought. The journey must be made on horseback across dangerous river fords and deep, ugly mountain passes; but his courage being equal to the occasion, he cheerfully faced every difficulty in his eagerness to secure the prize, and returned in four days with a brand new leather-bound Bible. The next few days he spent much time in arranging it with mine, by marking passages that we had studied together.



"Lonesome for my Old Pard."

Then came orders for him to return to the home ranch, and I was left alone again.

This was the last I ever saw of him. The same fall he was chosen, with several other boys, to go to Chicago in charge of a beef train. On his way home from Chicago he was murdered and robbed of his money by an assumed friend, who had treacherously betrayed his confidence. His capital was principally invested in the little ranch and bunch of stock that he and his brother had been able to accumulate by hard work and careful management. They shipped his body back to the old ranch for burial, and in the shade of the dear old Big Horns, just on a little rise of ground near the foot of the mountains, his grave is marked and kept by the love of many friends.

The boys said that the little leather-bound Bible was found in his pocket over his heart, where he was in the habit of carrying it. The little ranch and property reverted to his broken-hearted brother: but of all his possessions he values the little thumbworn Bible most.

One day, as he was reading some of the passages that his brother had marked and read so often, God's Spirit spoke to his heart, and he followed in his brother's footsteps.

CHAPTER III.

THE COWBOY ALONE WITH GOD AND NATURE.

"The heavens declare the glory of God,
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork.
Day unto day uttereth speech, and
Night unto night sheweth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language
Where their voice is not heard."

—David.

I LOVE David because he is so full of music and sacred sentiment. He always seems to be making love to God and nature, or trying to bring about a courtship between the two; while God and nature both respond to find in him a meeting-place where store their richest secrets and confide their love. Above all other prophets David steps forth from Scripture to share the joys and sorrows of my life. There is a kindred experience in his life as a shepherd boy that mellow into harmony with my thoughts and feelings everywhere I graze my herd or stake my camp. And many a time the shepherd boy of the Judean wilderness and the cowboy of the Western wilds weathered the storms together, or sang of God's goodness and love to the rhyme of rippling waters or sobbing winds.

After David had led his flock all day long in the green pastures and beside the still waters of the Jordan, he would kraal them for the night, roll his bed out under the stars, and say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." After I had ridden hard all day along the lonely trails of the Rockies, looking after my herds of cattle and horses, I'd camp for the night, and, opening the Book, would read, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake." Then I'd roll my bed out under the stars and say: "The Lord is my shepherd, too: I shall not want."

David, from his sheep-cote, looks up into the clear azure of the midnight skies at the twinkling stars, and says, "The heavens declare the glory of God." David, in commending God on His wonderful creation, takes me with him. I believe that I have seen some of the grandest pieces of nature under the sun. I have lived on the Big Horn Mountains in summer when the wild flowers were gay and the whole mountain a mass of foliage and bloom.

I have seen huge columns of granite and brown limestone hundreds of feet high almost completely covered with mosses and lichens, watered with spray where the cataract leaps from the cliff to dash itself into foam on the rocks below. Down in the canyon, in the clear, cool shade of pine and maple, where the big rocks toss its broken current back time and again in mad rushing ripples, or hold it in deep, smooth eddies in some flood-swept bed, I have seen the trout

streams so filled with speckled beauties that every rock, ripple and eddy were shining with fins and scales. Here and there, where the pine and maple grow lighter, clumps of brown-barked birches, bending over its banks, rise and fall with a regular whish, whish, dipping their leaves in their own shadows as they beat time to the stroke of the current, while the sunshine, dashing itself into bits against their tops, scatters down amongst their leaves to fall in a thousand fragments of light and shade on the dancing, rippling waters below.

I have rested in the shade of the canyon, where the moss and violet, together with sprays of forget-me-nots, sprang up to pillow my head, when the midday breeze was playing with the pine boughs, and listened while the wild birds sang a chorus to the rustling of pine needles and silvery tinkling of rippling waters, and thought that it was the sweetest music in the world. I will never forget a certain day when I rode my old horse around the circle to see that none of my horses or cattle had strayed down the steep rocky trails. While the warm sunshine was steeping the balmy air in the delicious fragrance of pine and flower, my horse, with long, free swing, sped down the trail, bathing my breast and brow in the soft summer breeze as I squared my shoulders to drink in the spicy nectar from the dew-capped rose and pine. It seemed to me that all nature was at her grandest and bent on praising God. There was the bear in the bush, the antelope on the divide, the

deer and elk in the park, the song birds in the trees, the eagle in the sky, and great bands of range cattle and horses everywhere. As I rode along listening to the songs of birds, the nickering of horses, the lowing of cattle, and the myriad of voices from the wilds, it seemed to me that all nature was overflowing with joy, and that every bird, from the sparrow to the eagle, and every creature, from the chipmunk to the four-year-old steer, was saying, "Glory to God in the highest; peace upon earth; good-will toward men."

The herd made me no trouble that day, so I turned circle for camp in time for an early supper, which I prepared over a camp-fire, cooking my bread in a frying-pan and roasting my venison in the coals, cutting an extra piece for faithful old Shep that had guarded camp in my absence.

After supper I located my saddle horses for the night, rolled my blanket out under the pines, and then climbed a hill back of the camp to view one of the grandest sights in the world—the sunset on the mountains.

I stood on the summit of the Big Horns, fifteen thousand feet above the sea level, and, looking across a great expanse of picturesque bad lands, watched the old sun hiding himself behind the rugged peak of the Rockies, one hundred and fifty miles away. He seemed for a moment like a huge golden sphere poised on the great, rocky spires. Then, sinking slowly from sight, he threw off great crimson, purple and golden sprays that blended the mountains with

the sky above till all seemed one molten mass of living, changing color.

The fantastic colored bluffs and rough, rocky canyons of the bad lands below catch the reflection and glow under the delicate tints of the sunset till the wooded rivers glisten from their dark green borders like great ribbons of jewelled silver; then, all mellowing with harmonious grandeur till the dusk-deepening, shadow-turning twilight calls forth the azure of the heavens as one by one the stars chase each other into sight, and the evening blossoms forth into the jewel-spangled dome of night, leaving me alone with God and nature.

I strolled back to camp, rekindled my fire, read a chapter and prayed my evening devotion by its flickering light. As I stretched out in my blankets to rest and lay gazing up through the stately pines into the heavens above, watching the shimmering twinkling of the stars and listening to the murmuring stream, to the night voices, the gentle breathings of breeze-swayed boughs, I thought of David, the shepherd boy, alone in the Judaean pastures, gazing up at the stars from his bed of grass and herbs, as he said softly to himself, "The heavens declare the glory of God," etc. Heaven seemed so near and solitude so grand that I could not sleep, for meditation had led my thoughts a pleasant way to find my love-steeped soul at rest in God. All that music, all the joy e'er brought the shepherd lad of the Judah wilderness, He gave the lone cowboy that night on the summit of the Big Horns.

As I lay gazing up at the stars, trying to measure God's infinite love by the fulness of the multitudes, I seemed a mere speck, a stray creature, less than a grain of sand compared with these. Yet in value I'm the price of His notice, His love, His providence; for the hand that formed me, fed me, led me, claimed me for a son—an heir brought back to the fold as gently as love draws love. For this one grand, majestic Being who baffles space meets me here to link time to eternity, and to reveal to me things in mystery—that indescribable something within me, Spirit-born, a spark of His own intelligence, that comprehends love, responds to love, feeds upon love.

This, and this alone, has led me back and fixed my destiny—for love can never die—and I shall claim an everlasting inheritance and feast on throughout eternity. And though I cannot understand, this much I know, that God is true. "For I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

Thus time sped on, rolling the old world farther and farther into the night till the Great Dipper, circling the North Star, pointed the hour for rising; and I left my nest to cook my breakfast and make ready for another day's ride.

The soft, balmy air, sweet in its mountain freshness with the odor of pine and flowers, made a rich dressing for my bread and venison. The birds astir in the tree tops open a free-to-all jubilee, and soon the woods and canyons are ringing with melody.

Thus begins another day of prayer and work and praise. The gray of the morning spreads in the eastern sky, the stars grow dimmer and dimmer until one by one they disappear, and the old sun begins to show himself above the horizon.

After climbing the mountain he seems to pause, as if to take a moment's rest before pouring forth his golden glory on another summer's morn. Then, coming into sight, he floods the beautiful landscape with light and shade, touching the dew-spangles on grass blade and flower into sparkling jewels, while my busy old dog makes trails through them as he chases the red squirrel from tree to tree, or comes back to the camp-fire to see how it's going with me.

The horse bell farther down the canyon, ringing a dozen echoes from rocks and wood, hazards their location with uncertainty, but old Shep's experience in woodcraft is equal to the task, so finishing his breakfast, off he starts in search of the horses, soon returning with the old bell horse and three brones. I left my breakfast to help him haze them into a little kraal that I had built out of pine boughs and such dry poles as I could collect. I then went back to finish my breakfast.

Old Shep was lying at the opposite side of the camp-fire, with his face on his paws, wagging his tail and looking wise, trying to work my sympathies up to the melting point by cocking his ears at me and whining mournfully. But I told him that there was no use in begging; that he would have to stay at camp

to keep the pack-rats from stealing the grub, promising him a day out with me later, if he'd be good. So the old feller trotted off to fish for crickets in a moss bed under a big tree, but left off his sport and stood guard when I started for my horse.

The day promising well for thought and adventure, and my romantic nature craving satisfaction, I tossed my rope on Headlight, a big fleet-footed black with a blaze face. Headlight was a bundle of nerve and muscle, full of life and energy, a lover of the circle, and could give the saddle just that easy, rolling motion that would impart energy and love of the trail to the rider.

As I swung into the saddle he went up against the bit with a vim that took all the slack out of the reins. Heading down the trail at a high run, he rolled the earth back under him in long, vigorous strides, rising and falling with the ease and lightness of a deer; his mighty strength playing itself with an energy and endurance that never lagged from morn till night.

A fog rising from the valley was rolling and tumbling in great clouds below us as it ascended the mountains. It was a beautiful sight! So I reined Headlight on a high cliff to enjoy it for a few moments.

The clouds, rolling up nearer and thicker, enveloped the whole base of the mountain, leaving its summit and the valley below in the sunshine. Soon the thick, gray clouds, rolling and tumbling between, gave

the impression that I was suspended in the heavens on a floating island, riding the clouds as lightly as a raft rides the waters. The fog, gradually rising, engulfed us, making our way so dark that we were obliged to camp till it cleared away up the summit to disappear in the heavens; and we soon got back to the trail again.

A deer sprang up in the open, and made for the brakes a little way to the right. Headlight was after him like a flash, while I got down my rope for a throw. The rocks were thick, but Headlight was gritty, and bound to stay with the chase, so that the winning seemed sure. Just as we were nearing rope shot, the deer got into the edge of the canyon, and we had to let him go.

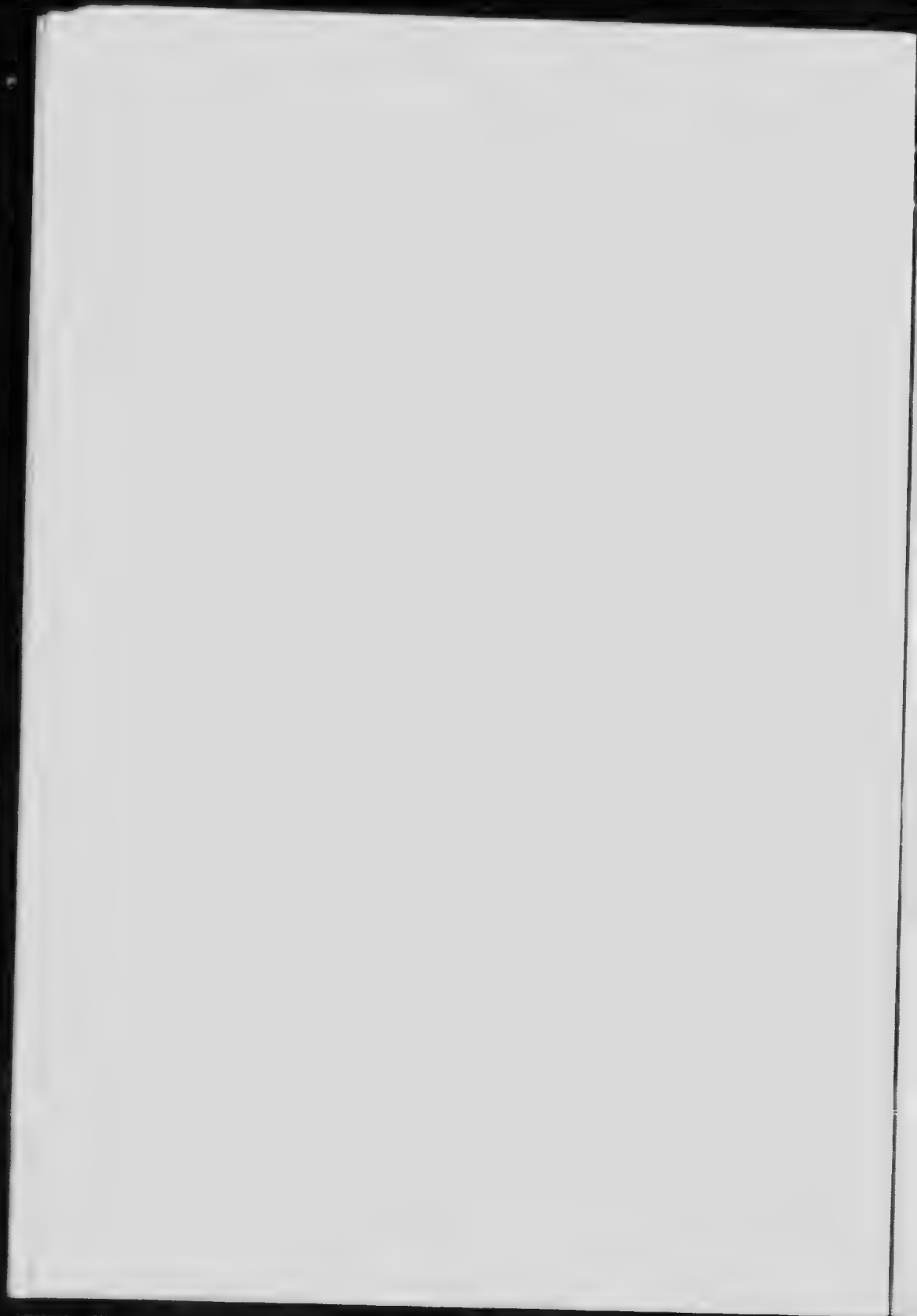
Headlight champed his bits and pawed restlessly with disappointment as I held him up to watch the deer for a moment while he disappeared among the brakes of the canyon.

Then, coiling my rope on the saddle-bow, we rode on again, Headlight carrying me along with an easy, jarless swing that seemed to cost him no effort. We were now nearly half way round the circle and, so far, none of the cattle or horses had ventured to break the trail dust beyond the circle line, and nothing had happened to mar the pleasure of the ride.

An antelope with her kid was making down a long divide for a piece of timber, to avoid a bald eagle which had been circling the heavens for some time in



Across the Big Divide.



search of prey. The race was very exciting for a few moments as the eagle, making quick, vicious dives to separate the two, beat them furiously with his wings. For a few seconds it looked as though he would succeed in plunging his talons into the little one, but the mother was desperate and fought him bravely, while the little one kept at her breast for protection. The eagle made a last, desperate effort just as they were entering the timber, but was met with a thrust that brought away feathers, as the mother with her kid dashed out of reach into the friendly woods. Then the eagle shot upward, circling away to resume his hunt. I thought of my calves and colts, and was anxious to get near enough to give him a pistol shot, but he kept out of range.

The weather had been very pleasant for several days but now I was conscious of a change in the atmosphere. The cattle were snuffling the air, flocks of sparrows were gathering into the timber, and the tree-toad was singing a mid-day song.

Then the trail, leading over fallen trees matted with heavy underbrush and big, sharp rocks, grew treacherous and threatened disaster as it crossed a deep rocky canyon, but after much scrambling, jumping, and clearing of timber we reached a nice little open along a spring branch at the bottom of a canyon. There I dismounted to give Headlight a few moments to graze, while I ate my fill of the nice wild strawberries that lined the branch as thick as clover blossoms.

We were so busy with our feast that we forgot the weather for a while, when suddenly a mighty thunderbolt, that brought us to our recollections with a jump, broke the heavens over our heads. In an instant I was in the saddle. Headlight went charging along the trail at the opposite side of the canyon as soon as my foot touched the stirrup. The lightning struck a big pine a little way to our right, tearing it in splinters as we passed. A few more jumps and we were in a little open high above the canyon, where I drew Headlight up and dismounted for safety.

The fury of the storm was now upon us; the heavens were as black as ink, and a roaring sound filled the air, while the waters poured out of the clouds in torrents. In a moment the canyon was a swollen flood.

The seething water, thick with shredded grass and leaves, in its madness bent and twisted the trees, breaking some, and tearing others up by the roots, sweeping them away like trash.

Great rocks, torn from their beds, boom like cannons as they strike against each other, moving to strike again as the flood rolls them down the canyon. The flood rises higher and higher as it goes tearing down the mountain, sweeping everything in its way.

I've often seen cloudbursts, but this was the nearest I had ever been to one. If I had been a moment later in passing the canyon nothing could have saved my life. So much for a good horse. The flood had passed on down the mountain, but the rain was still falling

as I went back down the trail to take a good look at the canyon.

It didn't seem like the same place at all, for the whole face of the canyon was changed. Great pines were uprooted and half-buried in mud and water; the leaves and grass were all swept from the mountain side; great holes were washed out here and there; the spring branch and strawberries were buried under twenty feet of rock and debris, and not a sign of the trail was left.

When I remembered my narrow escape, the thought of God's providence so overwhelmed me that I knelt by the tempest-swept canyon in as grateful recognition of His love and care as when David, breasting the tempest that swept the old Jordan valley, looked beyond the great lightning sheets that swept the heavens and, in answer to the thundering floods, said: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the seas thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

In a short time the sun came out as clear and beautiful as before. As I reined my horse up the mountain an eagle screamed just above my head. I wondered if it were the same one that had chased the antelope. I again thought of my calves and colts and reached for my pistol, but it being wet, I endured his tempting taunts and rode on in silence.

Headlight's ducking had freshened him up and made him feel more than ever like going. So I let him skim along as fast as possible and yet make a sure reading of the trail signs which were still undisturbed. We reached camp early. Old Shep was so glad to see us that he chased about camp laughing dog fashion and kicking up a great dust, dodging first at Headlight then at me. Thus ended another day's ride and another circle. I was just that much nearer the place where all the smaller circles shall run into the larger ones, and time shall touch eternity to be no more: where the last touch of nature shall melt into love, and the spirit leave this temple of clay to wing its way to a higher life, brighter happiness, fuller joy, a better home, where God's eternal heritage shall be my eternal portion.

THE COWBOY ALONE WITH GOD AND NATURE.

Sweet solitude ! Thy glories are
A cup of bliss to me ;
I drink a nectar from thy skies
That sets my spirit free.

I sing a hymn to the night wind,
Lower the heaven's bend,
Bearing an answer sweet to me,
That Jesus is my friend.

He is my life, my light, my all—
To Him my spirit clings ;
I find a shelter from the storms
Beneath His precious wings.

Cowboy Alone with God and Nature. 39

He leadeth me in pastures green,
The silent waters by ;
He findeth me a sheltered camp
Beneath the troubled sky.

His wondrous eye pervadeth space,
In every place His wings ;
Where'er I camp His precious love
A thousand blessings brings.

O, Solitude ! How little worth
A thousand worlds to me !
Without the smile of Jesus love,
A thousand hells they'd be.

CHAPTER IV.

OLD MIKE'S DEATH WARRANT.

IT was a cold morning late in October when our string of saddle horses made little trails in the white frosty grass, as we lined them up in front of the ranch cabins to receive our bed, grub, and tin kitchen for the trip. Since I had finished the job of line riding on the mountain it had been a hard season on me. Orders kept coming in for fresh excursions. First, making a six weeks' beef trail in all kinds of weather, with double night guards frequent, often keeping the saddle twenty-four hours a day for a whole week at a time; for days weathering the storm, soaked to the skin with cold rains. Next a hard siege with the pitchfork outfit, picking up strays on the Gray Bull range. Then a siege of broncho busting, and now this trip away off through Prior Gap into Montana, rounding up stray cattle that had drifted across the line to the Crow Indian reservation, which was reckoned the hardest trip of all. It began to look to the boys as though the "Dakota Kid" had struck a whizzer this time, for sure.

But God had enlisted me in the cause, and I felt as though I had the whole arsenal of heaven at my back. So far, He had given me sand enough to outride

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Getting Ready for the Trip.

every bluff that old Mike could scare up; and with His help I had determined to win out this time, too.

I made up my mind that, by trusting God every hour for cheerfulness and grace, in order to serve my time as a true soldier of the Cross, I would accept the toughest proposition, knowing that in His own good time the probation would end; the boys would reach their limit—a place where they would have to acknowledge that one man and God is a majority even in a cow camp—and give God the glory for saving and keeping the most impossible of men, a wild and woolly cowboy, under the most trying circumstances.

Tough reps had brought me amongst strange outfits of men to butt at my religion and tack on fresh nicknames; hard double drilling under constant exposure of the trail and riding outlaw horses had not been enough to satisfy this unique son of Adam. One test more was needful to establish the quality of my religion and give it the proper stamp before his majesty could look upon it with dignity and pride, as an emblem becoming the fearlessness and dash of a monarch of the wild. And for this I must scour the red man's camp, and route his hunting ground in a fearless attempt to reclaim the stray cattle which we were sure he was watching with an eye to his winter's grub stake. This excursion was the present absorbing enterprise that was taking our thoughts and time.

We had just finished packing our horses, and were

tying the knot ends of our lash ropes to our pack saddles, when old Mike came sweeping up on his big black horse to give us our orders.

"Wal, Deacon," said he, his little grey eyes twinkling with fun as he set his brone up and dismounted for his talk, "if religion is any good at all, it ought to be an advantage to a cow outfit, hadn't it? Now, fer instance, I don't know how we'd ever manage to git along without you and yer religin. It jest seems that yer religin fixes you up fer anythin' that comes along. Now, this trip ere, fer instance, the other boys wouldn't tackle it at all, 'cause they ain't ready to die yet. They don't want them Injuns to git their scalp on a hoop, and I don't know how I'd manage if I hadn't a good Christian feller to send that's ready to die any minute. If a man's religin ain't worth more than his scalp it will never take him to heaven, anyhow, so the boys 'd have to lose.

"So, you see, yer religin is an advantage all around. Fer instance, if you git back with the stock all right, it's owin' to yer religin; but if the Injuns git after and smoke you up, why, yer religin 'll take you through to heaven, and you'll be jest that much ahead o' cow-chasin. Anyhow, this is the way I look at it. So, I say, good religin is an advantage to a cow outfit, if a man knows how to handle it. See?

"Here's Pat. He ain't saved yet, but maybe you can get the Lord to take hold of him, too, if you do nuff prayin' 'bout it. I kind o' think Pat's gittin' a little touch o' religin since you've got to be pards, fer

he says he didn't mind goin' anywhere with you, 'cause yer a good boy, and will do little extra work now and again to help a poor feller out when he's kind o' lazy. He'll go along with you when you couldn't hire him to go with one of them other cow-chasers.

"It seems to me that you ought to accept this as a mighty high compliment to yer religin, Deacon, and pride yerself a little more on that Bible of yers. Now, you fellers camp in Prior Gap. One of you can hold um up there, all right, while the other rounds um up from the outside.

"Pat, I guess you'd better hold um up and look after camp, 'cause Deacon here kin git round 'mong them Injuns a little slicker, and I reckon he'd do a little neater bit of circle work. See?"

I replied that, as far as I was concerned, I would do the best I could, and was thankful that he could ~~make~~ to make my religion such an advantage to his outfit. I agreed with him that if a man's religion wasn't worth more than his scalp it would never take him to heaven, and allowed that a Christian's scalp was safer than a sinner's anywhere, for God's promises to him are that every hair of his head is numbered.

Pat and I mounted our horses and headed them down the trail for the Big Horn ford, leaving old Mike chuckling to himself over the fun he was havin' with the "Dakota Kid." The sun, climbing higher into the heavens, had reached a place wh re it was

shedding warm, cheering waves on the old earth, melting the hoar frost from grass and sage bush, and drawing the cheerfulness out of nature in long happy trills, which hold the ear with melody while they go rippling up to the sky and mingle with the songs of thrush and lark to sound our route as we wound our way through the gaily-colored bad lands that line the river ford, and up the Crooked Creek Pass that leads around the Prior Mountains to the Gap, eighty miles away. At the north end of the Gap, near the Medicine Rock, we found a nice little flat, sheltered by the perpendicular walls of a canyon, which we selected as a suitable place for our camp-ground and hold-up. Here we built a kraal and opened our circle. Pat was so worthless and lazy that he left all the camp rustling and horse wrangling undone. So he had a snap of it at camp.

Mike's inference that Pat was getting a touch of religion, etc., was one of his jokes, and he and Pat seemed to enjoy it equally well. But, for all that, I was of the opinion that my religion was telling on them, and that Mike, especially, was more serious than he would admit. Pat, being the laziest and most reprobate man in the outfit, seemed the least likely to be affected by religion. I felt quite sure that Mike had sent us on the trip together, not because it was any advantage to the outfit for Pat to be with me, but just because he was determined to find the bottom of my religion, and make the test as severe as possible.

We had been at the Gap a few days, and things

were moving as well as could be expected under the circumstances, when one evening just before sundown Jack Bidford, from the home ranch, hit camp on a high horse, announcing with cowboy emphasis as he leaped to the ground that old Mike had been kicked by a horse and was about to die, and wanted to see "Deacon" just as soon as the Lord could get him there. One glance at his panting horse, with wide-spread nostrils and glassy eyes, as he braced himself on his tired legs, the foam dripping from his bit, his hide flecked with dust and sweat, told of his long, hard chase, and Jack's wild ride. Tossing my rope on to Blaze—the best horse in the string—I headed down the trail for the home ranch, eighty miles away. It was a long, hard ride. I kept rowling old Blaze up against a stiff gait, bouncing my quirt off his flanks once in a while when he got down to his last legs. Just before daylight that morning he brought me to the old ranch cabin on the Big Horn.

CHAPTER V.

DEATH AND BURIAL OF A COWBOY.

TURNING old Blaze into the kraal, I ran into the bunk-room, where Mike lay stretched out on his tarp. As I entered, the boys who were still standing around him, with their weather-beaten faces broken with the lines of sympathy, parted to make room for me. He must have been suffering intense pain, but was bearing it in silence. I could see that the end was near by the cold sweat on his temples, and the death hand shadowing his face and brow. Poor old Mike! His eyes, troubled and pathetic with sadness, looked up, but he could not raise his hand. As I knelt beside him I felt quite sure that he was thinking of what he had said in our last conversation about being "ready to die in a minute." The wretched condition of his poor sin-stained soul and broken body so touched my heart that I almost gave away to my feelings.

"How are you feeling, Mike," said I, a big lump choking my throat till I felt that, in spite of my efforts at self-control, the time had come for me to break the code of cowboy dignity by shedding a tear. Mike's voice was husky and broken as he

spoke with difficulty, but with characteristic assertiveness he nerved himself for the effort by forcing his way with grim determination through the intense pain that hung on every word as he replied, "Wal, Deacon, I'm gittin' no better mighty fast. The Lord has called me this time, for sure. I've got to pass in my checks pretty quick, but ain't ready to die yet. Don't care 'bout doin' business in the next world on the old plan, so I thought, maybe, things might be fixed up a little better if I could see you. I've abused you, Deacon. But it wasn't out of dislike to you or meanness, because I've allus liked you. I wanted to make sure that yer religin was the solid thing, and intended to square things up in the end if you stood the test. I jest wanted to make sure that you had the right kind o' religin, so that if ever I got in a pinch I'd know where to go to stock up. Wal, the pinch has come, but I reckon it's too late to take stock now. So I guess I'll still have to camp with the devil. I want to square up with you, anyhow, 'cause its right, and I can die easier. I'm mighty sorry for the way I've been treatin' you, Deacon, and I want all the boys to hear me say it. You've the genuine religin and we are wrong."

The confession, which was very effective, began to tell on the boys who were digging up their handkerchiefs to hide their twitching faces and streaming eyes. Some, leaving the room, were soon followed by the rest, their breasts heaving with emotion that could not be suppressed. There is nothing more

touching than to see a crowd of great brawny men moved to tears. Here was a proof of religion that the roughest cowboy was moved to see. It was a wonderful time! This was God's special time for dealing with these careless, wild, rough, reckless men. His hand was upon them for good. He knew every thought, emotion and desire. Every prank that they had played on Deacon had been a step by which He was leading them unconsciously to Himself. God was using the circumstance of Mike's confession as a centre of reaction in the minds of the boys, about which their whole conduct was suddenly revolving itself. One incident after another was recalling their failure to suppress the Word which He had sent amongst them. This, in contrast with His great love and power in saving Deacon and maintaining His Word, was weaving an influence in their hearts that would never be ignored or forgotten.

Mike and I were left alone for a time. I opened my little Bible and read to him a few verses of Scripture containing God's offers of mercy to the lost and erring. He, seeing at once that God was able, willing, and loved to save him, responded while I prayed, and laying his burden of sin down at the foot of the cross, he breathed a prayer for help and forgiveness, and by faith he laid hold of God, trusting and believing with all the simplicity of a little child. His faith, though weak, was active, so that God's Spirit touched his heart and changed it in a minute, ushering him into His kingdom under the genuine article,





"Poor old Mike is dead!"

which guaranteed him the new plan of business for the next world. While he was praising God for His goodness and love a beautiful light came into his little grey eyes, and his face lighted up with an expression of happiness which spoke the supreme satisfaction of the redeemed.

On the boys' return into the room, Mike called them all around him and said, "Boys, it's all right with me now; God has forgiven all my sins; I'm going to heaven; all you fellers 'd better foller." Then closing his eyes he seemed to be sinking very rapidly, his breath growing shorter and shorter. Thinking that the end had come we watched him in breathless silence. In a short time he revived a little, and looking toward me, tried to speak. I was still kneeling beside him with bended ear to catch his last words. He faintly said, "Deacon, give me a Christian burial." A calm, sweet peace hung upon his words, filling the room while it lingered for a moment to touch each heart before passing away, bearing Mike's spirit on its wings. It was the holy hush that God's Spirit breathes to the ransomed, "Lo, I am with you alway; even unto the end."

Twenty-four hours before this fatal occurrence he was a strong, vigorous man, in the very pink of health, with more daring energy than any of us, and apparently as reckless of religion and death as though he expected to live on in this world forever; yet just before his death he testified with his own lips to his conversion, which to all was positive proof that he had

made his peace with God and was even now in paradise.

The striking circumstances incident to this fatal event brought the boys to consider a proposition that proved to them beyond doubt that no man, however reckless, daring and full of vim, has any cinch on this life. They witnessed a demonstration of true religion that made this consideration doubly impressive, for some of them have already made up their minds to profit by it.

We all loved old Mike in spite of his hard, rough ways. We prepared him for burial. The boys handled him as tenderly as a little child, while we dressed him in a blue flannel shirt, pair of neat trousers and white socks, knotting a white silk handkerchief about his neck; then we laid him back on his tarp. Poor old Mike!

The inconvenience of transportation hindered our getting a casket. There was no lumber to be had. The nearest trading-post was one hundred and fifty miles distant. The only connection, excepting the freight trail over which the ranchers hauled their supplies, was a pack-horse mail route. So the very best we could do was to make a coffin out of an old wagon box.

In the evening just before sunset, after wrapping him carefully in his blankets and laying him in the coffin, we carried him slowly and tenderly out to the little grave that the boys had dug in the bad land bluff back of the ranch. The boys stood back with hats

off as we lowered him in the grave. It was a touching sight! The rough weather-beaten, danger-hardened men of the range, with the hard, rough lines of their tear-stained faces broken with strong feeling, with fearless breasts heaving with emotion, stood around with bare heads while Deacon, with tear-dimmed eyes and trembling lips, opened his old weather-beaten Bible and began to read a few verses from its thumb-worn pages, ending with the fourth verse of Revelation 21: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Then, closing the Book, he began

THE FUNERAL SERMON.

Boys, this is a solemn hour! Poor old Mike is dead. He has struck his last camp, made his last ride and said his last farewell. We meet to commit him to the care of One who has taken the spirit from the clay, with the promise of better things. He was our comrade, our leader, our friend, yet the fate that claimed him as a prey still watches. And here we must leave him till Gabriel breaks the sleep that seals his lips and calls us all to the bar of God. May we all prepare to meet there as brothers. So let God seal this vow as now we commit him to the dust.

Dear old Mike! He was a man amongst us; a friend where comrades meet. His memory leaves

us all a legacy rich in brotherhood and love. We miss him; we mourn his death: we meet as mortals meet bereaved of a brother.

Boys, I know not what to say. This seems to me a time when man keeps silent and God speaks. Let us seek divine consolation. Heaven bends in sympathy.

The circumstances incident to our brother's death could scarcely have been more deplorable, and yet as comrades we can all clasp hands and say that, in spite of his intense suffering, he bore his pain without a murmur, and at last met death as a victor meets his God: for "death is swallowed up in victory." There is no death in God: it is but an ascension, a stepping to a higher life, a fuller joy, a sweeter happiness, a better world. It is rest, it is home, it is heaven, and we may all reach it.

One time Jesus stood by the grave of a friend, and said: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Let us thank God for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us rejoice that we have a God who is full of righteous compassion and tender mercies; who sympathizes with us in our bereavement, soothes our sufferings, forgives our shortcomings, pardons our sins, and, leading captivity captive, conquers death and hell. We have more than this. We have a Father who stands at the end of the lonely trail with outstretched arms and streaming eyes to

welcome the wanderer home : One who says, " Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet ; for this my son was dead, and is alive again : he was lost and is found."

Boys, though toil and storms may worry us here, and cold and heat twist our bones, yet there is sweet rest beyond, and Mike has reached it. There is a place of shelter for the weary soul, where the grass and trees are always green, the sun always shines and fruit springs up on every hand, where we can camp throughout all eternity in a perfect atmosphere, where all tears are dried away, and death, pain and sorrow never come. But we will have to do some hard riding to reach it.

Mike still leads our circle, and the trail is open. He will expect us to make it through. We don't know who will be the next to strike camp. Boys ! get right with God, and then the next time the " black horse " hits camp we shall be ready in a minute.

Then Deacon prayed for God to seal the ceremony with His Holy Spirit, and keep Mike's grave open in the hearts of his comrades, that the conversion of him who led the old circle so long and faithfully might be a landmark along the trail pointing the heavenly way, helping us all to bring up a good circle when we strike our last camp and make our last ride. Then the little grave was filled partly with earth, finishing it with rock to ensure it against wild animals.

With heavy hearts we turned from the little rock mound that marked Mike's grave and walked back to camp in silence. A strange loneliness settled on the little company, hanging crape on every thought, which draped the old ranch in mourning. The flickering light of the open fire-place threw uncertain shadows in mournful images on the rude furnishings that shroud an empty berth, to deepen the gloom as the boys, with dejected faces, collected in the old bunk-room for the night.

That night the boys allowed that it would be all right if Deacon would read his Bible and pray with them, to which I gladly complied. This was the beginning of a revival in the cow camp. Christian cowboys are not so scarce now, and you'll find more than one of them carrying a Bible in his war-bag. You can tell by the way that they set their horses, do the circle and rustle camp that their religion has received the proper stripe, and has been established as an emblem becoming the fearlessness and dash of a rugged cowboy of the wilds.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW JACK PHILLIPS SKEERT UP A PRAYER.

MY old camp partner, Jack Phillips—a big, three-cornered cowboy with straps, spurs, and a good horse—was right from the Texas Panhandle. He had a shock of red hair that stood out all around his head like the wig of a Fiji islander. He had a big Texas sombrero, tattooed with all sorts of cow-brands, a pair of twinkling blue eyes, a six-shooter, and I never saw his face for whiskers. He was about six foot four inches in his socks, as tough as whale-bone, built for all kinds of weather, and was one of those fellers as are all muscle, bone and smiles.

Jack was a great lad to be out with because he was a tremendous story-teller. He had a voice like a fog-horn and lungs like a bellows, with energy enough to pump a pair of forges. He always managed to ride the best horse in the outfit, so it didn't matter how hard the wind blew, where the storm came from, or how much you disliked to hear his stories, you'd have to listen whether you wanted to or not; for if you should happen to get the trail on him a few jumps, he would dodge around the sage bush and over the rocks, keeping right at your elbow, shouting

it in your ear. If the wind was howling and the storm wild, all he had to do was to raise his voice an octave, pull his bellows and every word would bore its way through the storm into the drum of your ear as plain as thunder bouncing off a tin roof.

Jack had a few faults of his own, but, like a lot of other fellers, he was so proud of them that they spoiled his companionship and he hadn't sense enough to know it. No matter how interesting you might be making a thing, or how large the crowd, he wouldn't be satisfied unless he could manage all the entertaining by bringing himself in on your conversation, and was just fool enough to tackle a thing whether he could handle it or not. So if ever you allowed your story to reach a place where he could possibly pick it up, he would take it off your hands in a moment and your chance was gone. Even if you should shout back at him ever so loud he would only increase the volume of his voice till he reached a point where he could drown you out; and, if you didn't like that, he would only laugh at you, keeping right on just the same, no matter how much he was spoiling your story.

The wisest thing to do, then, while in Jack's company, was to allow him to do all the talking while you kept quiet. The strangest thing about his conversation was that, while you were compelled to listen to him, you couldn't remember much that he said, so the only damage that he could work you, after all, was to deprive you of the privilege of being sociable.

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One time Jack and I were sent out to look after a band of cattle that had been thrown out on Piney to pick up on the spring range. We had finished the inspection and were returning to the home ranch across the Big Horn River, sixty miles away, where we were to report their condition. Our brones were green, for they'd only been ridden a few times. My brone, a little sawed-off, with legs like a churn, was built on the Dutchman plan—strong for a lift, but slow for a run—while Jack's brone was a fine clean-limbed animal, quick, mettlesome, and as swift as a deer. As we rode along Jack began, first by making fun of my horse: next came his stories.

I wasn't very much interested in his talk, but knew that nothing could be done by way of stopping him, so concluded to let him go on. After awhile there came a lull. So trying to turn his mind to something better I introduced the subject of religion, and got a few jumps on him in pretty fair shape, but he came back at me in a minute and I had to let him have the trail again. But I had made my point all right. He said: "Yes, I know somethin' 'bout religin, 'cause my mother was a good Christian, and she used to tell me 'bout bein' good and all that, but somehow the devil seems to be in me and I've got to be bad. I respect good religin, and have seen a few times in my life when a little prayer'd come in mighty handy, but I never have been able to skeer one up in time to do any good yet.

"I don't see how you can hold yer religin 'mong

us fellers. We're allus pokin' fun at yer, gittin' yer on bad horses, callin' yer all sorts o' nicknames, and puttin' on mock faces to take off yer religin. Yet it doesn't seem to be any different with you; you keep right on readin' o' yer Bible jest the same, storm or shine."

Just here he was run down again for awhile for the want of something more to say about religion, but I hadn't time to do much talking till he was back at me as fresh as ever about his mother's religion, and my good sand, etc.

I don't remember all that he said, for I was praying for a chance to quote some Scripture to him along the lines of salvation, just to give him something better to think about. All at once we came out of the bad lands in sight of the river ford. Our long ride over the hot dry trail made both ourselves and brones very thirsty.

As we rode along toward the river we were wondering how our wild and woolly brones would swim, as neither of them had ever taken the river under saddle. The river, high and thick with sand and bad land wash, was swift and wicked, and went flopping along like a live mud hole sliding down hill, spluttering and bubbling, splashing over here and there, to daub the air and shore with flying bits of thin mud, while just below the ford it took a sudden fall, tearing itself over great jagged rocks. Its rushing rapids and wicked whirlpools were like little war boats. Our hearts beat a forward march in answer

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to the roaring challenge that met our ears. It was a pretty tough prospect for a swim, but Jack and I were cow-chasers of the proper stripe, and we just allowed that the old Big Horn hadn't 'nuff sand to run a whizzer on us, so, dismounting to drink, we made ready for the swim.

We planned to carry our ropes in our hands, to be ready so that if either horse should give up we would have another chance of getting ashore.

I loosened my saddle cinch, remounted my horse, got my rope ready, and was waiting on Jack, who was still fussing with his saddle cinch, when his horse jumped, broke away, and plunged into the river, taking his rope with him. As quick as thought I tossed my rope at the brone, but, missing his head, the rope settled over the saddle horn, and not wanting to tie my rope to him in that shape with a loose saddle, I turned my heels to him and away he went across the river trailing my rope after him. In a short time he landed on the other shore, and went tearing away through the foot reeds at a high run with the rope dragging behind his legs, while the knot end touched him up and down again, as it broke away from rock and sage bush. Churnlegs was too slow to chase him, so we just had to stand still and watch him quitting the country.

There was only one horse now betwixt us and the wicked old river, and as we didn't feel like camping here till the river went down, we began to figure on making Churnlegs get us both across. Finally Jack

said: "Now, Deacon, if we had one of them ropes of our'n you could take dalleys around yer saddle horn and tow me across like a sawlog."

This gave me a thought, so I blindfolded Churnlegs and rode him out to a sluggish place in the river where the water was almost to a swim, in order that he couldn't kick. Jack agreed to hang on to his tail while I towed him across. So after a little careful management he succeeded in getting a good hold of Churnleg's tail. "Now, Jack," said I, "let loose just as soon as we touch bottom on the other side, so that you won't get kicked."

"Yes," says Jack. And at once I jerked off the blindfold and jumped Churnlegs into swimming water.

Churnlegs felt the sawlog at his tail for the first time. Catching a glance at Jack, he became so excited that he raised himself up and went scooting across the river like a canvas-back duck. I looked over my shoulder to see how it was coming with Jack. From where the horse's tail left his body to Jack's heels seemed to be about forty feet long. Jack was coming every way—first on his face with head under water, next on his back with his face under water, while the muddy water was twisting his long unkept hair and beard into great ropes about his face and neck.

I began to see that if I didn't get him ashore it would soon be all up with poor Jack Phillips. A little farther and my horse touched bottom. I shouted, "Jack, turn loose! Turn loose!" But he had forgot-

ten the word. My horse began rearing and jumping. I thought that surely Jack would get kicked. Again I roared at the top of my voice, "Jack, turn loose!" But he still hung on with grim death. By this time Churnlegs had reached shallow water, and began whirling round and round like the pivot of a buzz saw, while Jack cut the circle at the end of his tail.

Finally he got jarred loose somehow, and was swept down the stream. Although the water was only a couple feet deep, yet it was as wild as a mill-race, and was rushing Jack toward the rapids at a tremendous rate. It looked as though he must have gotten badly hurt, else he would have been scrambling out. The river had a wicked look down amongst the little red boats. I saw that I would have to do something very quick to save Jack from the rapids. So jumping off my horse I ran down the shore till I came opposite him; then, making one jump into the water, I caught him by the collar just as he was going over the rapids, and hauled him to shore in time to save his life. If I had been as long about it as I have been in telling it, I would only be able to tell you how Jack Phillips went over the rapids.

Well, I got him out on the river bank, pumped the water out of him, shook him up, and got him so that he could speak. I asked him how he felt when he was in the water, and he said that that was one of the times when he thought a prayer'd come in mighty handy, but didn't seem to be able to skeer one up in time, and asked me to help him out. So kneeling in

the sand, I thanked God that by sparing Jack Phillip's life He had given him another chance to get salvation.

Then I tried to persuade Jack to get right with God, so that he could do his own praying, but like many others, he tried to excuse himself by saying that tomorrow would be a better day for the business. Next he asked me about Churnlegs. I had to tell him that in my rush to save his life my brone had ran off and left us both to go a-foot.

After Jack sufficiently recovered, we started to finish our trip to the home ranch on foot. Shanks soon began to lag with Jack; his spurs were only in the way, and for once he found that he hadn't the best horse. Jack's soaking seemed to spoil his stories, for he didn't toot his horn once on his way home. So taking advantage of this opportunity, I tried to persuade him to become a Christian, but he listened in silence to my pleadings.

Jack was about played out when we reached the ranch, and I got a few of the other lads to help me round up our brones. In a few days after Jack left the outfit and I have never seen him since.

It might be well for us to take a lesson from this adventure. We've been placed here in this old world on business, and we're on our way to the home ranch across the river where we'll have to report our trip. This old world is full of all sorts of hot, dry bad lands, and we've got a long, hard trail ahead of us to reach the ford. The old Jordan is wide and high,

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and its rapids are full of rocks. We will never be permitted to camp on this side of its banks. If, through carelessness, our horse escapes, neither horses' tails nor comrades can save us from being dashed over the rapids, and down amongst those little red boats, which are nothing but churned foam. Don't wait till you get there before you try to skeer up a prayer, but begin now.

"Lord, teach us to pray."

CHAPTER VII.

INITIATION OF A GREENHORN.

FOR a long time young Frank had the idea that it would be a great experience to visit the wild West and make the personal acquaintance of the rough-and-tumble Sandies of the range under circumstances favorable to his winning a reputation amongst them as a man worthy of his spurs. And to this end his vivid imagination had often pictured himself a cowboy of the real stripe with hat, boots, spurs, brone and all.

Frank never had the courage to attempt an enterprise of this kind till one evening, at a grand reception in the East, he met our employer, who invited him to visit his ranch among the Big Horns and get an experience on his own account. Frank's enthusiasm was so rash that he banked his whole energy and good sense for the coveted experience, and was so restless to make the trip that he couldn't wait for the old man, whose business detained him for some time, so it was arranged for Frank to take the trip alone.

One day he turned up at the home ranch in cowboy regalia, with a letter of introduction from the old man. This letter instructed the foreman to receive him with kindness and attention: to give him full access to round-up, camp and ranch; to see that he



Broncho Breaking.

was well equipped with saddle, horse and fire-arms; to be sure to provide him a reliable guide, so that he might enjoy the hunting, fishing, and rough-and-tumble cowboy life, adding a postscript that Frank was addicted to writing poetry, and to look out for "write-ups."

Frank was an educated, bright, well-bred lad from one of the leading families of New York, with an intelligent face, refined nature, and a quick, poetical temperament. He was a talented writer as well. Up to the present time he had considered his environments too tame to justify his romantic imagination, but felt that after a trip into the wilds of the Western cow range he might be able to write a few essays on man and nature which would startle the world—and well it might.

The foreman introduced him to the boys as a young author from the East, a great friend of the old man's, and just out to get acquainted with the life and have a good time with us for awhile.

In a moment the boys, grinning in silence, sized him up from top to toe—hat, shirt, pants, high-heeled boots, spurs, and all. Frank felt that they were making a mental calculation of his real importance as a cowboy tough, and thought that if he failed to leave that impression his chances would be pretty slim in a crowd like this, so made up his mind to stake his reputation on a bold bluff. He braced himself up against their criticisms with brazen defiance, trying to assume the air of one who could go through

the blue smoke without a quiver by screwing the delicate lines of his face down to a focus calculated to inspire them with the daring energy of one who would do or die. Altogether he made himself to appear the toughest man in the outfit. But really he had left an impression as contemptible as a cringing worm of the dust, for these Sandies knew the smell of blue smoke too well to be taken off by a man who had never seen its real curl, let alone carrying it for public exhibition.

Frank's scheme was really a detestable failure, because these quick-witted Sandies were too keen to permit such an opportunity for a little game to slip carelessly by, so they did a little play acting on behalf of aforesaid opportunity so neatly that poor Frank didn't see that they had taken his real measure till it was too late to save his hide. They jest allowed that he'd find out that a bluff of this kind wouldn't tally, and that it would take somethin' more than a poetical genius to ride a brone or shoot a bear. Besides, Frank's brazen assumption cut the pride of the honest cow-chaser, who had paid the real worth of his range experience in the dangers and hardships of the rough, wild life. The boys felt keenly the insult of Frank's presumption to take them off "when he didn't know which end of a horse to tie to a post."

The quick-witted foreman saw at a glance the trap that Frank was laying for himself, and allowed, if the young gentleman is lookin' fer experience, it might be an advantage to him to get as much of it as

he could on his own hook. And to make the fun more interesting they assumed at once that Frank was their equal, began to comment on his good horse sense in the selection of his outfit, told him that he was just built for the business, that the white of his eye showed the pure nerve, that he was just as tough as any of them, that a horse would need to have lots of sand to run a whizzer on him, and that if he could manage to get those spurs of his'n hooked under once, a bronc might 'bout as well try to shake a leg off himself as to bring him out of the saddle.

Frank, not seeing through their tricks, began to take considerable pride in himself. His poetical genius tugged at the thought that he was a pretty smart fellow to get on to the way of taking off the cowboys so quickly. So, putting on more airs than ever, he set his jaws with a determined grip as he pulled at his cigarette, toying carelessly with his six-shooter, and striking the rowels of his spurs against the ground to make them ring as he walked away. In fact, he made himself appear the most desperate character in the camp. But the cowboys had been there so often before that they hadn't much trouble in working the ropes to catch Frank in his own loop.

Cowboys have all sympathy for a modest greenhorn who has enough good horse sense to keep in place, but when a feller like Frank, brazen enough to assume a whole lot of dignity to which he has no claim, comes along, the honest cow-chaser just figures to get him a proper initiation, as they call it. Frank was billed for such an initiation.

There was a certain horse in the outfit called Pete that the boys kept for this purpose. He was a smooth-built, clean-limbed red roan of the strawberry pattern, with a Roman nose and large ears. He was always fat and handsome, would eat bits of bread and sugar out of your hand, rub his nose against your arms, and listened while you talked to him and patted him on the neck. Pete seemed to be the model of docility, but could size a greenhorn up the moment he felt his weight in the stirrup, and being as full of tricks as an egg is full of meat, he enjoyed breaking them in quite as well as the boys did.

Frank was highly elated when they gave him Pete for his first ride, as he was the most showy horse in the outfit.

He found Pete on the shady side of the kraal, propped up on three legs, with head down, having a quiet little nap, taking off the gentle horse to perfection.

Pete didn't seem to wake up till Frank tapped him on the hip. Then, looking around and taking the bit without moving out of his tracks, he followed with slack rein, smelling gently at Frank's sleeve while he went to get the saddle, as if to assure the young gentleman that he had nothing to fear from Peter.

Frank, accepting the boys' invitation for a ride through the bad lands, pulled himself into the saddle and off he went, Pete moving off with a free, jarless swing which was delightfully easy to ride. Frank, squaring his shoulders and perching his head in graceful imitation of the noble rider, was just beginning to think that he was cutting a pretty nice figure

when, all at once. Pete stubs his toe and lurches violently forward, making a succession of stiff-legged efforts at catching his balance. This brought the cantle of the saddle against Frank's back and sent the saddle-horn dodging in a way that made him dizzy. Frank felt for a moment as though the saddle had suddenly come to life and was wrenching itself out of his grip. Forgetting his graceful figure, he made a few desperate efforts to get hold of either horse or saddle somewhere, but was unsuccessful in his attempt, for old Pete came down on one knee with a twist which tore Frank loose from everything and sent him flying over his head. Pete stands quietly by, his long ears drooping in sorrow, watching Frank with mournful eyes as he picks himself up to find one knee torn from his trousers, his shirt out at the corner and his hat off.

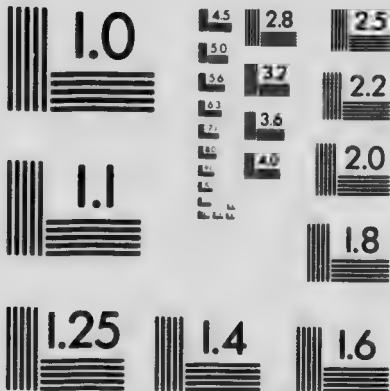
The boys, expecting something of the kind, look on while Frank remounts, but with cowboy drollery—affected to be greatly amused that Pete should stumble—they reassured him with much palaver, that Pete was the surest-footed horse in the outfit.

The cunning old horse had no sooner regained Frank's confidence than he stumbled again, this time throwing Frank against the saddle-horn and skinning his leg quite badly. Frank talks loudly about giving his horse a good hiding, but the cute old fellow goes limping off on three legs, with his long ears flopping helplessly over his eyes, making himself appear so dejected that Frank has compassion on him and stays his hand.



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In a little while Old Pete's leg gets all right again, and he goes up against the bit with new vim. The boys notice this and propose a race.

Frank had often ridden a horse at full vim over the nice even courses of the East, and in his eagerness to retrieve any reputation he might have lost in his fall from Pete, he was rash enough to bank his slender experience against a race with the cowboys through the rough, rocky bad lands.

Away they go down a bad land gulch, the boys keeping Pete in the lead, slashing him once in a while by mistake as they pretend to whip at their own horses in a sham effort to get ahead. The country grows rougher, and as Pete jumps over a big rock and turns up another gulch, Frank loses both stirrups and his bridle-reins. The boys at a glance see the difficulty, and getting down their ropes, make wild excitement for a while in a mock effort at roping Pete, but really whipping him with their loops, making a mad race up hill and down, through heavy sage bush, over rocks and down gulches, Frank hanging on to the saddle-horn for dear life, the flying stirrups striking him first on the arms and then on the legs as the race goes on. Every time that Pete shows any signs of slowing down, the boys make wild dashes at him, calling to Frank, and saying, "Hang on, Frank, hang on! We'll soon have him caught." But really they were chasing him around the bad lands just for the fun of seeing him ride, for if they wanted to they could have caught him the first throw.

Suddenly Pete makes up his mind that he will stop long enough to get his wind, anyhow. So he throws on the brakes—rough-locking with all fours as he screws his heels down in the sand, and sets back on his haunches—coming to a standstill after a succession of quick, stiff-legged jumps. Frank finishes the performance by turning a handspring over his head and lighting in a sage bush ten feet away.

By the time Frank picks himself up, the boys have old Pete in the loop, and with long serious faces ask him if he is hurt, saying that they were very sorry they hadn't been able to catch his horse before he had thrown him off.

Frank had a big notion not to mount Pete again, but the ranch was quite a distance away, and besides it would never do to let the boys know that his nerve was so nearly gone. Frank made up his mind to try him once more.

The boys jest allowed that it was one of old Pete's days for actin' mean, and if they were in Frank's place next time he got off any of his smart tricks they would use them spurs of his'n on him. Old Pete stood by quieter than ever, while Frank knotted the bridle-reins over his neck, so that he wouldn't lose them again, and off they started for home.

On reaching a rough piece of trail near the ranch, Pete began to wobble and stagger about as if his legs might collapse any minute.

Frank thought of the boys' sayings concerning old

Pete's "off-days," etc., and felt, somehow, that he owed him a grudge, and made up his mind that this was his opportunity for getting even with old Pete, seeing he was tired out, so he began to dig him in the ribs with them spurs of his'n, and all at once Pete's legs got back into working order.

For a moment Frank had a queer sensation, as if he were being shot up amongst the clouds till he reached a point—he never cou'd tell just how far from the earth—where the laws of gravitation overcame the force of expulsion, and he felt himself being drawn back to earth again with a velocity which made the wind whistle and his hair pull. Then there was a sudden bringing up, and when he came to himself he was lying on the broad of his back, the fall being such a hard one that at first it seemed to Frank that a myriad of little stars had been jarred out of place and were falling all around him with a rapidity that made his eyes blur and his head swim. He began in a dazed sort of way to look for the boys, who were all standing around. Old Pete was standing by, impudent enough to offer him another trial if he thought there was any mistake and still wanted to try them spurs of his'n. But Frank began to think there must be something wrong somewhere, and made up his mind on the spot if ever he tackled old Pete again it would be in a close kraal with a ten-foot pole. So he led him home by the bridle-reins while the boys, walking their horses slowly along by his side with a pretended sympathy, were really laughing in their sleeves.

That night Frank looked himself over carefully and found that his pants were torn in several places, his fancy hat-band gone, one spur broken in the shank, and the skin on his arms and legs bruised or broken from elbow to knee where he had come in contact with the ground, bits of sage bush, and flying stirrups, etc. And he made up his mind that he had enough material at least for one essay on man and nature.

Young Frank's initiation into cowboy life, although a stirring fact, is coincident to many similar cases. His reception among the cowboy was not an unavoidable collision with the elements of the wild and woolly West so much as it was the result of the lack of modesty and discretion on his part.

If he had made his appearance amongst them in ordinary citizen's clothing, modestly confessing his tender experience of the wild West, and throwing himself on their protection, they would have undertaken his training with kindness and consideration, ready to do a man to save him from all unnecessary dangers and hardships. But simply because he had assumed the garb of a cowboy tough, and appeared amongst them as such without the least bit of the experience that it requires to back a bluff of this kind home, the assumption was taken as an insult to the profession by the wily cowboy, who knew the full value of his laurels through hard-earned experience. And seeing through the sham, they didn't purpose being caricatured by this brazen young impostor unless he could pay the price.

CH APTER VIII.

THE COWBOY'S SCRAP PILE.

FRANK had been so badly bruised from head to foot that he was obliged to keep his bed for several days. No doctor could be procured, so medical aid and consolation reverted, by unanimous vote, to Deacon, who accepted his new responsibility with cheerfulness, praying that God would make him a blessing to the greenhorn.

Thus Frank's period of convalescence proved a splendid opportunity for showing him kindness and winning his confidence. Frank was a good-hearted, affectionate lad, and with hearty appreciation he responded to my efforts at making him comfortable. He grew so friendly that in a day or two he voluntarily confided his chief ambition, and began to open up the real sentiment of his heart in a way that made it easy for me to offer him advice. By our talks often taking a serious turn, I soon discovered a religious vein in his nature, through which I undertook to quicken his sympathies by frequent mention of our moral obligation to God as being sufficient reason for a whole-souled service. Pleased with my fearless, persistent devotion under the hard circumstances of



Cattle Grazing on River Bank.

camp life, Frank faithfully responded, and our sympathies became mutual.

After ail, Frank was quite a sensible lad, and made up his mind to be his own natural self again, which was very becoming to a young gentleman and highly agreeable to all.

The dare-devil expression had all left his face, and his good breeding began to assert itself once more, lighting his clear-cut, handsome features with quick, bright intelligence. He saw through the whole method of things at camp, and made up his mind that he had acted as a fool in presuming to pit his delicate frame and tender experience against these weather-beaten, toil-hardened, time-drilled veterans of the range, and accepted his reception amongst them as his just deserts.

The boys, who were quick to understand, were soon making advances of genuine friendship, and were so kind that altogether it looked as though Frank would yet be a great favorite with them all. Of course, their cowboy dignity restrained them from apologizing for their rash treatment of him, but their actions told plainly that they were sorry Peter had used him so roughly. This experience might be valued second-hand. If a feller wishes to appear amongst hard, brawny men with favor, it is always best to be modest enough, in asserting his importance, to give his sand and experience an easy chance of backing the bluff home in case anyone should call him. After lying around camp till all the sore spots

had taken themselves out of his way and his legs got limbered up again, he thought that he could manage an easy horse if I would go his security.

Considering Frank's slender experience in riding, the responsibility seemed pretty heavy to undertake alone. I kept hunting around till I got a good reliable old horse, of long business standing, to go on my bond. I arranged at once for a meeting between Frank and old Mr. Horse. After a good bit of questioning and cross-examination nothing could be brought against the old feller's reputation but a spavin, two frozen ears, and a dose of heaves. The security being accepted, the negotiation closed in my favor, and we planned for a ride at once.

In spite of all precautions Frank was a little shy of his horse at first, for his experience with old Pete kept popping up at the cable end of his nerves with a broken spur or torn pant leg—say nothing about a few sore spots somewhere—every time the old horse cocked his crumpled ear stub or brushed away a fly with his tail. But the faithful old fellow was true to his charge, and felt his way along so slowly and carefully that he not only won Frank's confidence, but succeeded in so inspiring his courage that he forgot all about his initiation and was wishing for them spurs of his'n again.

The mountain air was fresh and bracing, and the birds were singing from the tree-tops along the river bank as we left the ranch for the Cowboy's Scrap Pile, a gaily-colored piece of bad lands a few miles

back. The prospects ran high for a pleasant day. Frank's poetical nature, springing into life at every turn, was breathing out its gladness on bird and flower as we rode along. Even the little horn toad, in his rough brown skin, winking his beady little eye at us from his corner in the sage bush, touched his heart to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne." When all nature greets us with smiles and sunshine, and God is near, it is time to be happy. Why not sing? The merri-aunt playing on our heart-strings goes rippling up to our lips to burst forth into melody as we expand our lungs to their greatest volume, while we level up the bad lands by filling depression in hill and canyon with song, which the echoes toss up to burst forth in glad "Hallelujahs" on all sides of the winding trail.

The scene changes. We cross a gulch at the other side of a flat and come to the Scrap Pile. It was a beautiful sight. Frank seemed bewildered with amazement. He could hardly conceive how nature could arrange colors and figures of bluffs with such grand effect. All around us were little hills of all shapes and colors. These little hills were from forty to one hundred and fifty feet high. They were composed of layers of different colored mineral formation, varying in width from three to ten feet. They ran parallel to the general plan of the country, with one layer placed on top of another as evenly as layer cake, say, beginning with black at the base and running up through all the different mineral colors,

brown, blue, green, purple, red, pink, grey, etc., and terminating in white. Each bluff is variegated with a regularity and precision perfect in design and harmony, and is cut by the action of water into all sorts of fantastic shapes and figures. Some of them resemble old Roman castles in detail—watch towers, turrets, palisaded walls, battlements and all; others resembling grand churches, with spires, domes and chimneys; others great business blocks, with here and there squares of dwelling-houses of grotesque and original design. Two pyramids, about fifty feet high, and almost as perfect in shape as those of Egypt, guard the principal streets, and in the centre a public square and imposing courthouse, all so vivid in their plan that it really takes little imagination to identify them. Altogether they give the appearance of a small, neatly-finished city.

They are scattered about haphazard on an oblong square, with no regard to shape, size, or design, and yet, on the whole, there is something about their finish which suggests order and precision. Each one seems to be as clean-cut and well finished in the detail of each outline as if it had just been completed according to the design of a master architect from the best masonry. There are several hundreds of these bluffs in the Scrap Pile, and, with the exception of the pyramids, no two of them are alike in anything but color. The same layers of color run parallel throughout the whole, and, with the exception of a couple of bad land breaks, all are lined up with little

gray-colored streets, from six to forty feet wide. These streets line up the base of each bluff as level as a die, and as neatly as though all had just been laid in mortar.

This is a wonderful bit of nature, but it is easily explained. The formation of mineral is so strong that not a stalk of vegetation can grow. It is of such a nature that, while it is hard and solid when dry, it will slacken and run under the action of water. It is so easily cut by water that the falling rain has cut each bluff into its present fantastic shape and clearness of outline. The wash spreads out between the bluffs as smoothly and evenly as water seeks its own level, which, when dry, becomes hard enough to bear a horse up without scarcely leaving as much as a hoof-print.

The rainfall is sufficient to repair and keep the whole in constant appearance of newness. Every outline of each bluff, from turret to base, is as clean and clear cut—even to the sharp angle where it meets the pavement—as if it had just been pointed up with trowel and level board. I have ridden through the Scrap Pile when the winds and rain were beating against its curious little spire-crested hills, which are full of gracefully-curved figures, curious, irregular angles, and perpendicular walls, and the streets were ankle deep in the thick milky wash. As I passed through I noticed how much easier the rain cut some layers of color than others. So it wasn't hard for me to explain to Frank how the Cowboy's Scrap Pile was

so full of odd shapes and sights and always has the appearance of a brand-new city.

After spending several hours in the Scrap Pile, reviewing its wonders and studying its formation, Frank, seating himself, got out his note-book and began using up all the adjectives that he could scrape together, and tried to draw on my vocabulary in his effort to describe their fantastic beauty. But, of course, I had small aspirations for literary honors, and as I didn't care to be drawn into his poetry, I repeated what an Indian once said to me, "O-ta yap-pa muspesh-ne." (Lots of talk. Don't know how.) Frank laughed heartily at this as we mounted our horses and rode away, stopping at the farther side of the flat to have another look at the Scrap Pile before passing down the bad land gulch out of sight.

The Scrap Pile had awed Frank's gay humor into thoughtful gravity, and for some time the silence was broken only by falling hoofs and champing bits as our horses moved along, tossing their heads and trumpeting to clear their nostrils of the alkali dust that comes rolling up in little clouds at every step. Frank had my sympathy in his lofty ambition, and as the ominous meditation was tugging at his handsome features, I was praying that the gentle muse might entrust another poet with a favorite elegy. While his sombre thoughts were pulling his face out longer and longer my heart went up in a petition for the Scrap Pile. Finally he turned with solemn dignity and asked what, in my mind, was their most

striking feature. I thought that if ever I became famous for an idea this was my opportunity, so I told him that they taught a wonderful lesson of God's love to His children. He asked me to draw the illustration, and for a moment I felt like a trapped grouse. My idea had brought me under polite obligation to Frank, and for a short time I did not feel equal to the explanation, since I knew that the theme was deserving a thought that would give his lofty genius an impetus to sacred lore. I mentioned that beautiful bit of scripture which is found in Revelation, where St. John speaks of the "holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband:" and, as our conversation proceeded on this line the unique little hills sprang forth into newness of life and meaning. Frank's fertile mind takes up the idea that we, as the bride of Christ, are unique in this world; that, while no two of us are alike in the peculiarities of our individual make-up, yet we all belong to the New City; we are all one in Christ. And, while some seem small and insignificant, others large and imposing, yet all are so easily cut by the Spirit of God that the shed blood of His Son, constantly applied, is sufficient to keep us continually in newness of life. The same layers of color running parallel to the general plan of the country variegate each Christian with a regularity and precision perfect in design and harmony. Beginning at the bottom, say with love, and running up through all the fruits of the

Spirit—joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, faith—the whole blending as they reach the top in the only perfect color, the white light of God's eternal glory. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 4.) "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." (Rom. xii. 6.)

I have ridden through the city when the wind and the storm was on, and when God was pouring His Spirit on the people in torrents. I noticed how much easier some layers of color were cut than others, so it wasn't hard to make Frank understand why it is that no two Christians are exactly alike. I did not see Frank's write-up on the subject, but for several days the illustration so far absorbed his mind that he applied for citizenship in the New City, and was accepted on oath of allegiance. To-day the attributes which characterize his new nature harmonize with the beautiful colors of Christianity, to blend in the white light of God's eternal glory.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEVIL'S BLOWOUTS.

IMPRESSIONS are wrought indelibly. With some a mere suggestion will often turn our thoughts back o'er the flight of years to flow again as freshly as ever through some old deserted channel, recalling a past experience with an accuracy and vividness of detail that is as startling in its effect as a flood.

For instance, a dog may bark at Jack in the dark, and instantly his mind will revert to a time when he lost one boot-top and a part of his trousers in a hasty effort to climb a tree: and he will recall the weight and energy to an ounce of that faithful old dog that stood guard at Deacon Thompson's apple orchard that night years ago when the katydid wept and the stars grew dim: and he'll feel just as much as ever like climbing a tree.

So it is with me: the neighing of a horse, the buzzing of a June bug, or the lively little mosquito tuning his fife to the notes of "Annie Laurie," as he whets his bill on the door-post and spreads his wings for an evening serenade, often recalls the good old times of the range in some thrilling adventure or pleasant experience in the days when I hazed the weary broncho along some bad land trail, or chased

the long-horned range cow through the sage bush, eating my grub by the camp-fire and sleeping under the open canopy of heaven.

Yes, those were good old days! I know not the value of their goodness. They taught me the true balance between God and nature, and proportioned all things to explain His mysteries by placing their highest values within my easy reach, leaving me alone with solitude to learn of God, and to this I attribute much that I now achieve by way of talent, method or training.

The illustration of God's will through the field of nature is a privilege we may all enjoy through the favor of God. And to this end He leads me by whatever sentiment that marks my words, as gently as He draws the robin, through instinct, to slake his thirst or satisfy his hunger from the wild blackberry that springs up by the rocks along the brook.

Although the robin and I may have a separate bush, yet we feast and drink and sing together, and although he may not understand, yet he mingles my thoughts with sweetness and helps me to praise God, and links my faith to His wonderful providence, for we know that even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without our Father's grace. Nothing is lost to God but sin. Even the bad lands seem to find a deep significance, impressive of some great lesson He would teach us.

It was amongst the rocks of Judea's desolate wilderness that God led His Son to prepare Him, through

the word of truth, to face and defeat Satan in his three great temptations which embody the sins of the world. The fact of Satan's choice of this place for attacking Christ seems to prove that there is nothing in nature more suggestive of the idea of the tempter's effort to damn the brightest and purest of God's children, to warp and twist poor helpless human beings into shapeless deformity of soul and body, than a piece of rough, rocky country, broken by barren hills and dismal canyons. The rougher and more desolate the country the more striking the illustration. So if you can conceive of a region that has the power to burden your mind with gloom and despondency because of its barrenness, you are nearing a place which will help you to realize the awfulness of sin. Yet God can give the victory even here.

I have seen such places amongst the barren wilds of Western deserts under circumstances favorable to a presentation of the illustration, and this experience asserts its right to the same illustration, since the comparison is inferred by the aversion that God and Nature have always had toward disease, disorder and the devil.

I have seen the White River chalk-beds; have ridden amongst the fire-holes of the Big Horns, have helped to round up the Cheyenne bad lands, but of all the countries I have ever seen or heard tell of the Devil's Blowouts is the most impassable.

After taking orders for its round up, we hadn't been in it long till we came to the conclusion that it

was well named. Some of us began to think that the devil surely had a hand in the arrangement of this particular bit of creation and designed it as a sort of man-trap for unfortunate cow-chasers. Before we split it up for circle work two of the boys went down in an alkali bog, and if we hadn't been on hand with our ropes nothing short of a miracle could have saved their lives.

The Devil's Blowouts is an irregular piece of bad lands, extending over about one and a half townships surrounded by impassable canyons and rocky cliffs, covered with little cone-shaped hills, all cut after the same model. These little hills are about two hundred feet high, the tops of which are so nearly level with each other that altogether they resemble an old-fashioned hay meadow—cut, bunched and ready for the stack yard.

One time an Irishman, who lived in New York, in writing his brother, said: "New York is all level but the hills, and the Yankees say that it is all level under the hills, too."

The valleys between those little hills are cut into by deep, irregular canyons and ugly washouts. Wherever you find a level place at all it is infested with poisonous springs or sink-holes and alkali bogs, which seem to be bottomless, and thin enough to swamp a saddle blanket.

The Blowouts is a rendezvous for outlaw horses and cattle, whose restless guards and wild stampedes have for years been cutting it into a network of trails,

which run in all directions amongst its hills and canyons. But of the many thousands of trails only one leads out—that is the Plain Trail, which crosses the country from north to south, all the rest losing themselves somewhere in its barren wilds. The Plain Trail can only be identified by close acquaintance, because it is constantly crossed by trails running in all directions which so closely resemble the Plain Trail that a stranger could not distinguish between them. After going into the Blowouts a mile or two, if he ventures off the Plain Trail, he is sure to get lost, for the hills are so nearly the same shape, size and height that not one of them will serve as a landmark or point for observation; so if he should climb one for a view he could only see a waste of little brown hills, stretching one after another away into the distance like the waves of a troubled sea, with numberless well-beaten cow trails running in bewildering confusion between them. If he were seeking the Plain Trail he might select one that would cross a washout, leading him around a couple of hills to an abrupt stop on the edge of a perpendicular canyon, where one step more would dash him in pieces on the rocks hundreds of feet below. On the other side, about a stone's throw, the trail seems to be continued, but this impassable canyon baffles his progress. Hoping to find a crossing, he rides along its edge till he finds another trail that winds its way down to a break in the side of the canyon, making it appear accessible. Dreading to

proceed farther on horseback, he dismounts, picks his way over the sharp rocks and treacherous breaks of the steep, winding trail, crosses a strip of sliding rock, which threatens every step to start an avalanche under his feet, sweeping him and his brone down to certain destruction. Pretty soon the trail leaves these sliding rocks, passing around some big boulders, grows dangerously narrow and steep as it turns a sharp ang'e on the edge of a high precipice, where the wind whistles in his ears and tugs at his hair as he braces himself to keep from being drawn over its edge. Descending slowly and carefully he reaches the bottom, after many dangers and frights, where he finds several trails leading off in different directions, but after trying one and then another, he is forced to turn back each time, to find that he is in a great irregular rock basin hundreds of feet deep. This rock basin is full of dismal halls, which give back mournful echoes as his brone's feet clash against its rocky bed. The only accessible trail is the dangerous one that had brought him down. He pauses to examine an underground outlet, floored with jagged rocks, and finds the wind making hideous noises, and rumbling, growling sounds as it sucks through the dark, mysterious recesses of its hidden caverns, suggesting a quick approach to the infernal regions. This finishes him for the rock basin. Mounting his horse he rides quickly back to the trail, where he dismounts to retrace his steps. Up, up he climbs cautiously step by step, passing again the dangerous point where the trail angles abruptly

around the perpendicular cliff, pausing for a moment's rest before trying the sliding rocks again. Then more cautiously than ever he feels his way over the thin, flat rock that covers the steep mountain side and threatens at every step to slip under his feet, carrying him over the cliff into the rocky basin below. Just as he is nearing the solid trail his horse makes a blunder that starts the sliding rocks, and he and his brone are being swept down the mountain with the velocity of an avalanche. Like a flash he lets go his horse and makes a desperate leap to save his life. Throwing himself forward and catching a clump of juniper trees, he swings out of range as the rock-slide—carrying his horse with it—dashes over the cliff with a deafening roar.

In a few minutes the slide is past, and weak and trembling, on hands and knees, he picks his way back to the trail, not venturing to his feet again till he reaches a safe place at the top; then looking cautiously back he thinks that he has narrowly escaped death, and resolves not to try another canyon. Still hoping to find the Plain Trail, he rises after a moment's rest to pursue his way again. After crossing several trails, he selects one that strikes boldly out through the hills, seemingly heading all the canyons and washouts. As he follows along he soon comes on a little flat where the trail grows broader and deeper. Thinking that he has been successful he takes fresh courage and walks cheerfully along, but suddenly the trail comes to an abrupt ending, and just seems to disappear in the solid earth right at his very feet. In

surprise he halts and notices that the formation has suddenly changed, and the surface of the ground is covered with a thick white substance as clear as hour frost—it is alkali.

He examines the ground carefully at the end of the trail, and finds to his horror that beneath a little thin crust of sun-dried mud, like a flake of ice on a pool, is one of those awful alkali bogs. Another step and he would have plunged in over his head, and nothing short of Providence could have saved him. One plunge beneath its thin mud, as strong as lye, would have filled his eyes, nose and mouth, and would have strangled and blinded him into helplessness, so that he would have sunken from sight forever. He feels that this is another narrow escape, and quickly retraces his steps.

Sad and heavy-hearted, he turns back into the hills, this time following a trail that avoids the alkali bogs and sinkholes, and, angling to the south, he seems to hold a direct bearing with the Plain Trail.

For some time he travels on, crossing several wash-outs and canyons, and at last, as the country grows milder, he climbs a hill to find if he can see out. The way seems clear, and he thinks that away off in the distance, beyond the sea of little brown hills, he discovers a lofty elevation. It is the Big Divide, where the promised land slopes down to meet the impassable blowouts.

He thinks sweetly of liberty again, and almost feels like singing as he goes back to the trail with assurance that he is on the right one at last. A little

farther on it leads around a hill and brings him to an abrupt standstill between two canyons at a point where their two perpendicular cliffs form a sharp angle. The look over the edge makes him think of the great rock basin, and in despair he turns, feeling that he is hopelessly lost. The barren hills afford no sustenance; he is tired and famished, and the stars stare him in the face. There is just one thing left—he will call for help. It may be that some one travelling the Plain Trail will hear and point him out. So he begins to call with all his might: "Help! help!! I'm lost! I'm lost!!" But he is not the only one who is lost. He hears the call of others. Many around him, for hundreds are lost in these blowouts. Some who ride recklessly over cliffs lie in a shapeless mass on the rocks below; others are imprisoned in the terrible rock basin through lack of courage to face their steps lest the sliding rocks along the narrow trail should start an avalanche which would sweep them down to destruction. Some of them, dropping off the ends of the trails, are strangling in the alkali bogs; others dropping out of sight into sinkholes.

These are not the only Devil's Blowouts in the world, for it is full of them, just as nearly this description as you please—dangerous cliffs, rock basins, canyons, washouts, sinkholes, alkali bogs, Plain Trail, and all. It only requires a description of this area of bad lands to show up their real character.

This whole world is interspersed with the Devil's Blowouts. It isn't safe for anyone passing through to

leave the Plain Trail for a moment, else he may be lost in the barren wilds.

When a man takes his first drink or rolls his first cigarette he leaves the Plain Trail and rides straight for the dangerous rock cliff where every day so many are being dashed headlong to their death.

The sceptic has been in the bad lands for such a long time that he can't distinguish the Plain Trail from the others, even if he crosses it ever so often.

The man who commits sacrilege is passing down the steep mountain trail, over which is the dangerous sliding rock into the great rock basin, and the clash of his feet on the stone floor below fills its dismal halls with mournful echoes that haunt him.

The infidel has taken the trail that ends in the alkali bogs, and nothing short of a miracle can save him.

The liar, gambler, adulterer, hypocrite, etc., are riding over cliffs and dropping into alkali bogs and sinkholes on every hand.

Countless thousands are in the Blowouts, some of them seeking deliverance, others, in hopeless despair, abandoning every effort to escape; others crowding against each other on the very edge of ugly bogs and pushing each other into sinkholes, over washouts or canyons; others straining their eyes from the top of some bluff for a sight of accessible land; some on a perpendicular cliff between two impassable canyons, death staring them in the face, responding to others with hopeless cries for help. All lost somewhere in the Blowouts because they would leave the Plain

Trail to wander in its barren wilds. What a miserable multitude, without God and alone in the world! Is this not so?

Where is the sceptic, the infidel, the swearer, the liar, the gambler, the scoffer, the man who dishonors God? Are they not all wandering together in the Blowouts?

Where are you? Where am I? Don't give up, brother! If you are away out in the Blowouts seeking for the Plain Trail, just stop and call for help. Shout with all your might, "Help! help!! I'm lost! I'm lost!!"

The devil may have made this old world a rendezvous for outlaws, but no matter how many times they cross the Plain Trail, they will never be able to cut trails enough to destroy it. You'll find that while all the rest of the trails will end in some barren wild, the Plain Trail will take you safely through the Blowouts to the promised land.

As the watercourse, living through years of drought, often outwearing the stream that cut it, at last renews its freshness and beauty as a rushing flood channel, so with us. A long deserted impression often existing, a coincident will sweep the thought back o'er the flight of years to flood some old deserted channel of the mind with vivid recollections of a past experience.

If at any time in the past you were a Christian I hope that something has been said in giving this lesson that will start a flood in the old dry channel that will sweep it clean and bring back its old-time freshness and beauty.

CHAPTER X.

STRAIGHT TRAIL RELIGION.

JOHAN THE BAPTIST, the great preacher of the wilderness, who turned all Jerusalem, Judea and the region of Jordan to repentance, had but two texts, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," or in other words, if you've been leading a crooked life come to God and get a religion that'll take all the kinks out of your trail, and hit a bee-line for the kingdom on a fresh horse.

My version of this text reads: Any man can follow a crooked trail, but it takes a good man to follow a straight one, because nowadays there are so many things in the way of a straight trail religion that a man can't ride very far in any direction without running against some obstruction or another. It takes more sand to go straight through than it does to dodge around.

The way to heaven is as straight as the day of judgment, and the only way we shall ever reach it is to go straight through everything. Nobody will ever make it by dodging around the crooked trails with a quid of tobacco in his mouth, a bottle of whiskey

in his boot leg or a bit of profanity in his heart. He'll have to be the straight man from top to toe.

The man who refuses to straighten up on every line, and have all the kinks taken out of his trail, will never have nerve enough to ride into Canaan by the old Jordan ford. He'll be like the children of Israel under Moses: the story of the ten spies will run a whizzer on him before he gets a taste of the milk and honey, and he will turn back to die among the old sin-cursed trails of the wilderness. No one will ever reach heaven till he gets a religion that will destroy his appetite for the flesh-pots of Egypt, that will face down the ten spies, and give him sand enough to tackle the old Jordan ford even in high water.

John the Baptist advocated a straight trail religion when he said: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." This means that it is going to take some hard climbing to get through, because we can't travel very far toward heaven nowadays without running into some obstruction or another. The man who hasn't got sand enough to climb straight up the rugged heights of old Mount Zion will never reach heaven by trying to get around on an easy grade.

When I was a boy I rode for an outfit whose home ranch was located at the head of a big divide. Whenever one of the boys came in sight of the ranch we could always tell whether he was bound for home or not by the way he rode. If he left the old trail and went prowling around through the bad lands, we

knew that he was after stock or something, for if he were coming home he would make a bee-line for the ranch, staying hard by the old trail that heads all the canyons, bad land washouts and alkali bogs.

When a feller comes in sight you can generally tell whether he is bound for heaven or not by the way he rides. If he is away out on the bad lands of sin prowling around amongst the barren rocks and canyons, you know that he is looking for stock or something, for if he were bound for heaven he would hit a bee-line for the kingdom, staying hard by the good old trail that heads all the canyons, bad land washouts, alkali bogs, etc.

Perhaps some of you fellers out in the sin-cursed bad lands wouldn't understand how to get back to the good old trail, even if you were told. Maybe some of you have been riding all your lives and never yet saw a straight trail outside of a railroad grade.

A number of years ago when two of the boys were riding for strays in the Bell Fouché country they ran across the Killpatrick crew, who were pushing the B. & M. railroad west through the wilds of Wyoming. This was the first work of that kind the boys had ever seen. They dismounted to watch the graders while they tore up the earth with their great ploughs and scrapers, moving rocks, trees and stumps out of the way, pulling down the high places and filling in the low places to make the grade smooth and level.

After watching them for awhile one said: "This is a great illustration of the way we are to get to

heaven." His friend asked him to explain, and he replied: "John the Baptist says, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' For instance, if you wanted to fix up a straight trail for the Lord, and you were like the 'Kills,' the first thing you would do would be to secure a railroad grant from the Government, the next you'd engage a reliable corps of civil engineers to find the most practical route and stake off the right of way. Then you'd ship in a carload of big Missouri mules, a lot of ploughs, scrapers, log chains, picks, shovels, crowbars, grub hoes, etc., and you'd import enough big three-cornered Swedes to operate the machinery and handle the mules in good shape. Then you'd set your Swedes and mules to work to remove all the obstructions along the right of way—houses, barns, chicken-coops, fences, rocks, trees, and everything that would hinder the work—you'd put in the plough and tear the whole line up from end to end; you'd throw out all the rocks and stumps and roots, pull down all the high places and fill in all the low places, and bridge all the worst canyons, rivers and bad land washouts. As soon as the trail'd be finished you'd have an expert engineer to inspect it, and when he'd pronounce it O.K. you'd have a beautiful piece of trail for the Lord when He'd visit you on His white horse."

Wal, this is just what John the Baptist meant when he said, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make his paths straight"; only the way of the Lord is not an overland route, but right through the human

heart. There is just where all the work's got to be done; there's where the surveying's got to be done, the right of way staked off, and all the obstructions removed. There's where all the digging up, the throwing out, the pulling down and filling in has got to be done. The human heart is often so rough and stony and full of rubbish that one couldn't faze it even with a plough or crowbar. So along comes John the Baptist and tells us how it is to be done. He says, "Repent ye." This means that you've got to do all the work yourself. The Lord's work is to run the survey, stake off the right and inspect the work, but you'll have to remove all the obstructions, drive the mules, hold the plough and scraper, and tear up the ground yourself. Each man is ordered to prepare his heart for the way of the Lord's coming and fix Him up a straight trail.

I began to chase cows for a living as soon as my legs were long enough to hang down the two sides of a horse. It didn't take me long to learn the great advantage there is in a straight trail, for it doesn't matter how hard it storms, how low the clouds, or where the wind comes from, you can follow a straight trail on and on to the end of time and not be lost. This is the reason that the heavenly way is so straight. If you should start for heaven this moment it doesn't matter how many clouds there are in sight, or how hard the tempest blows, you can follow it on and on, and when you come to the end of time you will not be lost, but will be right at Father's door.

Christ says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

The way to heaven is a straight line drawn between two points, from Christ the Saviour on earth to God the Father in heaven. We come to Christ, who pardons all our sins and puts us in line with the Father, who has made the trail so straight that if you stand at this end and look toward the pearly gate every man, woman and child that you see bound for heaven is so nearly in line that they look as though they were one person, and they are so nearly akin that, if you were one of them, whichever way you'd stretch your hand, behind or before, you'd touch a brother or sister. All bear such a perfect relation to each other that any two of them, from the one who has just entered the straight trail to the grey-haired old saint who has been on the way forty years, could change places and be at home. So if you get in line with God to-night you are just as near heaven as that dear old saint who is standing with his hand on the knocker of his Father's door, for a single stroke of time would promote either of you to glory.

But one man replies, "I'm a good Christian; I've been on the good old way for forty years, but I can't help swearing sometimes." Another says, "I'm a Christian, but I use tobacco." Another, "I tell lies, cheat my neighbor," etc. Yet all call themselves Christians. Nobody ever need try to mix sin with God, for He is a pure God, and has condemned sin and prepared a way whereby we can have all sin taken

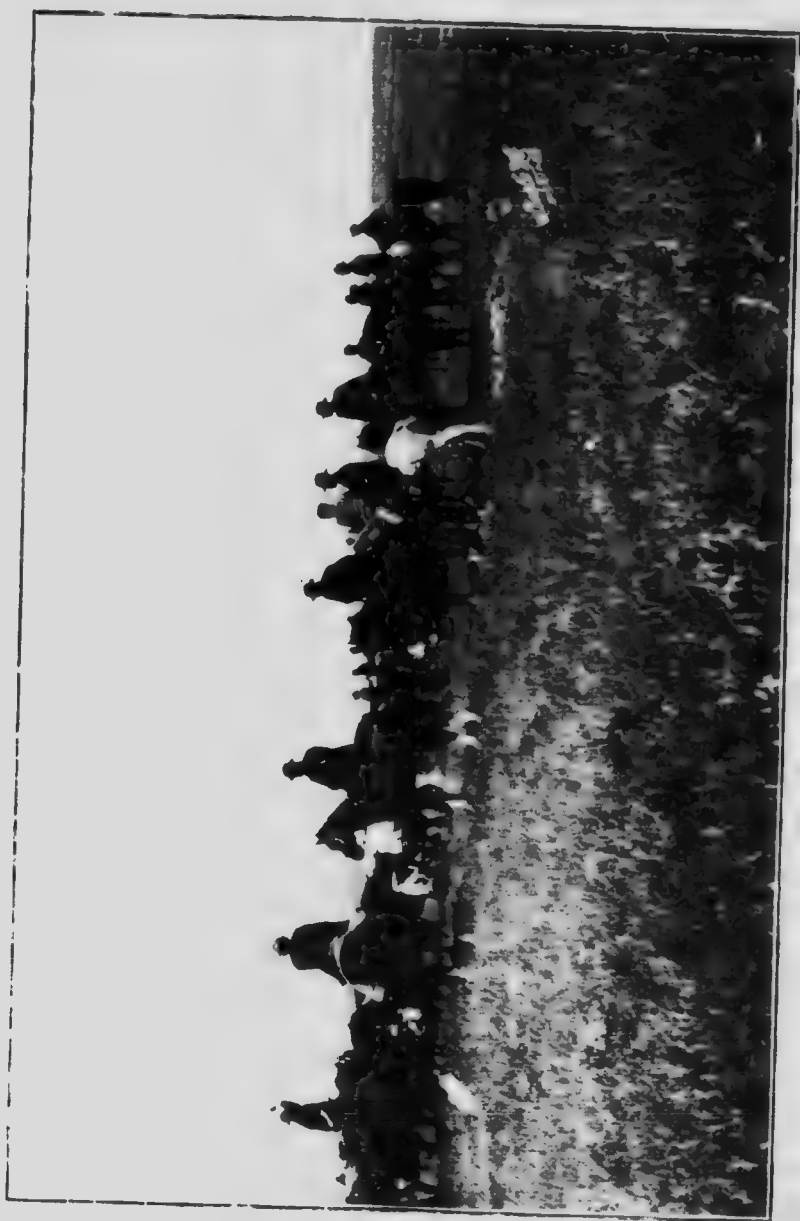
out of our hearts and lives. If one Christian swears, and another lies, and another cheats, how are we going to distinguish between God and the world? Some people tell us that they would start for heaven only there are so many of the church members who are hypocrites, and they don't want to be identified with them.

Well, sir, you're making a mistake. One sinner is just the same in God's sight as another. If you don't want to be identified with hypocrites, murderers, thieves and liars, the only way that you can do is to start for heaven at once, for God has so planned the straight trail that there isn't a single hypocrite between us and glory, because whether they belong to the church or not, they are all so crooked that they can't follow it, and so are obliged to hit the crooked trails that run the other way. A man may have good morals and be in good standing with the church, but if he has never experienced a change of heart, if he has never had the survey made and right-of-way staked off, if he has never removed the obstacles and never prepared the way of the Lord, he hasn't yet entered the straight trail that leads to heaven. No other trail will stand the Master's inspection. If you are on the broad road that leads to destruction, come to God and get a religion that will take all the kinks out of your trail, and hit a bee-line for the kingdom on a fresh horse. He'll give you an outfit that'll overcome every obstacle between here and the pearly gates.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE BRANDING IRON.

IN the open range of the great West, where sheep are raised in bands of three thousand and millions of cattle and horses roam the range with almost as little restraint as wild animals, all stock are identified by some mark outside of the close herd, rope, or kraal. The only legitimate hold a man can have on his cow, horse, or sheep is his brand.

Every brand to become legalized must be placed on file by the county clerk, and if it does not conflict with any recorded brand it is placed on record, which protects it against infringement. This gives the owner exclusive right to its use in county or state.

The vent, which is an extra mark added to the brand to distinguish an animal when sold is recorded with each brand, and ownership is legally transferred only when the vent is properly added to the brand and the bill of sale duly signed and sealed.

In case any man should try to steal his neighbor's stock by disfiguring his brand, he is prohibited from mpering with or changing any brand after it is run on an animal. Heavy penalties are fixed to enforce these laws, making it possible for any number of brands to exist on the same range without confliction.

Many of the Western states hold out such splendid inducements for stock-raising on the open range that men soon learn to despise the petty pasture system of the East and go in for raising stock wholesale. Some companies hold as many as thirty thousand cattle and horses. The work is systematized by round-up crews, organized for branding colts and calves and gathering stock for market. In the Northern states the round-up crew usually organizes for work in May and disbands in November, after most of the calves, colts and poorer stock have been brought to the ranch for food and shelter, while the hardier stock are left to weather the winter on the range, usually coming through in pretty good shape. Each round-up crew consists of a foreman, cook, twelve riders and a horse-wrangler.

The camp furnishes each rider with from six to ten saddle horses, but he must furnish his own saddle, spurs, throw-rope and war-bag. He generally owns a couple of pretty good horses to carry his bed and war-bag from one outfit to another when he wants to change foreman.

Each rider, to bear the distinction of cowboy, must have a practical knowledge of range work, be qualified by actual experience to stand the rough and tumble hardships and exposure of the saddle in all kinds of weather, summer or winter; one who can take the kinks out of a fractious broncho on a cold wet morning when he is bound to go on the fight, and tries to break the rider's neck anyhow, whether it is his plan

or not; one who is handy with a throw-rope, can run a neat brand, wrestle big fat range calves half a day at a time in the hot sun, read brands on sight, rustle a few meals for himself, either with the pistol or on salt sage or pine cones, and in case the work requires it, spend a few nights in his saddle-blankets under the stars. He must be able to keep the saddle twenty hours out of every twenty-four for days at a time, ride all kinds of horses, do double night guards in all kinds of weather, and if he should happen to get a day's rest on the trip, he is to accept it bonus his profession and thank his lucky stars.

The horse-wrangler is generally a minor cowboy, and is sometimes looked upon as a weaker vessel by the full-fledged Sandies of the range. His work is to herd brones for the outfit. As he has no pasture he must graze them in the bad lands late at night and be out again early in the morning, and have them rounded up and back to camp by the time the boys have finished breakfast.

The round-up cook must be as well acquainted with the country as a rider, for his business, in addition to cooking for the outfit, is to drive the great four-horse waggon through the bad lands and locate the camp ahead of the round-up.

He is generally a veteran cow-chaser, promoted to his present high position and increase of salary for his nerve, industry and knowledge of the business. He must have as much sand and good horse sense as any man in the camp. He must be a man for an

emergency, and be there all the time, for he has to do all his cooking in kettles and frying-pans over an open fire, no matter how hard the storm or how wet the wood. He is expected to have an abundance of good grub every meal, and be up at two o'clock in the morning, so that the boys can get through with their breakfast in time to start on circle or trail work.

After breakfast he cleans up the kitchen, packs all the camp outfit on his waggon, and drives his four horses five or six miles through break-neck bad lands, down hills where he has to set brakes and swing on the lines till his wheelers set back on their haunches, digging up the sand and grass as they screw their heels down in the earth to hold the waggon. He drives where, perhaps, no other man has ever ventured with a waggon. Sometimes the waggon sweeps the horses down ahead of it, starting the rocks to roll in a manner that would make an ordinary man's nerves grate against his backbone. Other times he has to crowd his way through heavy growths of sage bush or cross ugly washouts, drive down big bad land gulches, over rocks and through timbers, often fording ugly rivers, where the water has swum his horses across.

But this is only a small part of the cook's work. He seldom thinks it worth his while to comment on his hard roads if nothing occurs to prevent him from reaching the hold-up point in time to have the dinner ready for the boys when they come in off circle.

In trail work he is often required to make two drives of this kind in a day and be on hand with good

meals. A good round-up cook is generally a man of few words, but, like the foreman, is seldom fired for his frankness.

The foreman is always a veteran cow-chaser who is thoroughly acquainted with the range and methods of round-up work. He, too, is a man of few words, chosen for his management, good horse sense and business tact. He must be a first-class judge of stock and of cowboys in general, be able to read brands on the move, tell an animal's age at a glance and know whether its sides are puffed out with water, salt sage or good hard tallow. He is also able to tell on the spot the best way to split a piece of bad lands for fast work, and place his men to the best advantage.

He has the hiring and discharging of his men, but must use discretion, as the cowboy stands pretty firmly on the ground that he is any man's equal when it comes to a question of chasing cows. If he thinks that there has been anything mean about his discharge, he will be apt to demand satisfaction out of justice to his reputation as a first-class cow-chaser. The foreman will be expected by all hands to give him a fair show.

The crew starts at four o'clock in the morning and rounds up a circle from eight to ten miles across in a day. The foreman instructs the cook to strike camp and drive to a given point as near the centre as he can find wood and water. Then, dividing his men into two companies, he sends half of them each way around the circle, similar to the way the spokes divide a waggon wheel, each man dropping out when he comes

to that part of the circle where his spoke begins, the last man reaching the opposite side. Each man drives all the cattle that he finds between his two spokes to some convenient flat in the centre of the circle near the waggon. The first man in holds them in a bunch, while the rest help as they come in with their drive, one after another, a short time apart. The last man generally is a few hours later than the first.

Of course, the rougher the country the more irregular the circle will be, as the foreman must accommodate his crew to the country in a way that will work its rivers, divides and canyons to the best advantage. I have helped to round up strips of country between two canyons or rivers when the round-up was more of a triangle than a circle, but the same plan was followed as closely as possible in each case, and generally kept so near the old circle that we can call it a round-up instead of a triangle-up.

After five or six have got in with their drive, some of the boys will hold up the herd while others gather wood at a handy distance for heating the irons. Part of the crew takes dinner while the remainder keeps the work moving, and *vice versa*.

When all is ready the fire is started and the branding operation begins. Several of the boys hold the herd together, while two of the best ropers mount two of the best rope horses and begin catching the calves. They drag them by the neck from the herd to the fire, where the quick, sturdy calf-wrestler, on foot, catches each calf by the neck and flank as they drag them up by turns, and throwing him down holds him fast.



View Inside Branding Kraal.



The man with the branding iron puts his foot on the calf's neck and helps to hold him down, and at the same time he presses the red-hot iron against the calf's ribs till it burns through the hair into the white hide. Then the calf-wrestler jerks the rope off the calf's neck, and away he goes on a high jump just as the next calf comes in, the brand man repeating the process, while his pard keeps up the fire and hands him hot irons.

When it is necessary to brand a big animal, they put two ropes on him—one on his head and the other on his hind feet—and pull their horses in opposite directions till they have stretched him out on the ground.

After the branding is finished and there are any steers to be held up for market, two or three of the boys mount their best horses and cut the steers out of the herd, running them a short distance, where some of the other boys hold them in a separate herd, and the main bunch is let loose again. These steers are held night and day till enough of them have been gathered for shipment.

At weaning time in the fall, the calves are generally separated from the cows for the winter, and held in big sheds, where they are properly fed and watered.

Cowmen who own only a small stock band themselves together for the sake of convenience, and organize a round-up, selecting a cook, horse-wrangler and foreman from their number.

A horse round-up is managed a little differently, as they have to kraal horses to catch the colts. Generally

all a horse will know about being handled, up to the time he is three or four years old, is the little he will remember of the forty-foot rope and red-hot branding iron that the relentless man burned into his tender, quivering hide that hot afternoon on the round-up, when he was chased into a kraal and branded with a number of other colts; and he will act just as wild and unmanageable as a four-year-old bad land elk.

At this stage they are caught up for breaking. They are chased into a kraal again. This time the relentless cowboy puts his saddle upon him instead of his iron. Notwithstanding all his rearing and pitching, kicking, striking and squealing, at the end of a few days he is usually classed as a broke horse and put on the round-up for regular work.

Sometimes, when a cowboy doesn't feel that he has time to break his brone properly, he chases him into a kraal, throws his rope on his front feet and ties him down; then he saddles him, gets on his back, opens the rope off his feet, and up jumps the horse under the saddle. You can imagine what a wild brone will do to get up under these circumstances and find a man on his back for the first time. Quite often a cowboy will be able to ride his horse around the circle before he is able to guide him with a bridle. The first few days he will guide him by shooing him around with his hat.

The first few days of the spring round-up, when all the horses are aching to take the tickle out of the cowboys' spurs, it is great sport to see the boys starting for circle in the morning. Talk about Buffalo

Bill's outlaw horses! but here's where you have to come to see the real Wild West, because the country is rough and a bronc never picks out a nice piece of ground on which to have his fun.

Five or six of the boys all start at once, with their horses pitching through the rocks and trees, down washouts, over big rocks, where there is danger of the rider's neck every jump. But this doesn't make any difference to the bronc, for that is what he is after. Sometimes a feller will get thrown off, and then a couple of the other boys will chase his horse to rope him, and make the fun for awhile a little more interesting.

The old-fashioned round-up will soon be a thing of the past, because the aggressive Yankee farmer is continually pushing West for free homesteads. When he can't do better, he settles along the rivers and creeks, locating and fencing the best watering-places in the heart of the cow range.

Of course we can't blame him. He is a good honest feller, but then he is spoiling the cow business just the same, for when the watering-places and best of the range is taken up the big cow outfits must go to pieces.

Quite a number of the cowboys see this, and have taken up some nice ranches and gathered up fair herds of horses and cattle. They are beginning to talk about building comfortable houses and capturing some of the thrifty Yankee girls who are coming amongst them. I guess they are at the right thing now.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BRANDING IRON *VERSUS* THE MAN.

THIS beautiful West of ours—the great storehouse of natural treasure—stretching its magnificent plains, mountains and valleys away to the setting sun in countless acres, is interspersed with busy railroads that facilitate commerce to thrifty cities, lumber mills, cow camps and great mines, which, continually springing up everywhere with startling inducements of undeveloped wealth, are playing on the minds of men with all the avidity of a love for gold, attracting the immigration and commerce of the world in a way that threatens soon to break its record by carrying off first prize for Yankee thrift and industry. Business everywhere, backed by push and capital, snaps, crackles and blazes with Yankee wit and enterprise, firing men up to their opportunities till their blood boils with marvellous offers of capital and labor. If there is anything in their make-up that will take on steam at all, the register will run right up to ninety pounds to the square inch, making their hearts beat like the piston-head of a locomotive under full speed. The next thing they are grappling with the rest of the natives and tenderfeet for some bonanza, like the hungry school-boy in a peanut scramble.

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Steer-Branding on Round-up.

The Branding Iron *Versus* the Man. 111

Wherever commerce is facilitated by convenient means of transportation, great elevators, shearing pens, stock yards and smelters crowd the lines. Cargoes of grain, fruit and produce are grown for the market, and train-loads of live stock, wool, lumber and mineral ores are shipped. Broad stretches of fertile prairie lands, rolling back from the eye in graceful, unbroken beauty, wave forth on every hand in golden harvests or rich growths of native grasses which welcome the progressive farmer with promises of wealth that make his heart dance and his eyes shine with satisfaction year after year. Nearer the Rockies, where the country is more broken and arid, rich grazing lands crowd bad lands and mountain with desirable ranch locations that tickle the hearts of the stock men, who are still crowding the range with immense herds of cattle, horses and sheep, reaping a commercial value from the rich grass crops through the yearly increase of flocks and herds which has not yet reached its limit, though their income often scores the hundredth thousand mark. Beautiful valleys, lining each river and creek with great depths of rich soil formed by the sediment which centuries of falling rains and melting snows have washed down from the surrounding mountains, are made available to cultivation by easy systems of irrigation, which fertilize their rich meadow lands and grain fields to prolific harvests for the hardy settlers, who are still finding homesteads in this mountainous region. Accessible belts of pine and fir timbers intersperse the

country or line the mountains, giving a picturesque finish to the scenery, while rich veins of coal and mineral ores underlie the land in many places with all the natural resources at hand for their development. Sometimes in sight of beef herds or shearing pens are great stamp mills with their heavy trip hammers, which rise and fall with the regularity of a pendulum, working day and night with restless might and energy.

In some places men blast and work whole mountains to feed those mighty ore-crushers, which grind the rock into powder at the rate of thousands of tons per day. The rivers wash sluices till they are clogged with powdered rock for miles below the mills—for instance, take the Homestake Mine of the Black Hills. Many prospectors spend their lives in eager expectation searching out the hidden treasures of the Rockies. I have camped in many lonely places along the creeks and rivers of these mountains where colors could be washed out of their beds in frying-pans—five, ten, fifteen at a trip.

Although I have never made prospecting my business, I can testify that there is something very exciting about washing for the bright yellow metal, even where the colors are small and few. When a person is qualified by training and experience to make an accurate reading of every indication, there is nothing more exciting than prospecting for gold, especially where the lead promises a vein which will bring a fortune in a day. It generally takes time and work

to estimate the extent and value of a gold lead. But men are rash and impulsive when they think that they are on the verge of a gold bank; and when they have the promise of a quick fortune in a gold claim excitement knows no restraint.

This is usually the case in organizing new camps. With a fresh crew for each shift, hammer and saw get no rest day nor night till, like magic, a village is brought forth with its rows of tents and shanties containing stores, saloons, gambling-dens and brothels with wide open doors, and all stocked and running at full blast within a few days.

The rush still crowding in brings all kinds of characters to swell the boom. Women, in immodest efforts to share the spoil, mingle freely with the men as they throng the streets and public-houses or work their mines. When prospects are founded on solid resources substantial cities are often built under very exciting circumstances. A golden wedge will sometimes split a community into hell-deserving fragments, leaving a lasting blight on the record of its history.

There is a mania of forgetting God that becomes contagious under certain conditions. In some places in this Western country, with its great mines, cow camps, grain fields and resourceful cities, the very atmosphere seems to become favorable to these conditions, and like the ague and malaria infested regions of the south, few men can come in contact with such atmospheres without becoming infested with this dangerous, soul-damning epidemic, which seems to spread fastest where money is easiest made.

In their eagerness to make money men sometimes get so far astray from God that business places of all kinds are open, wholesale and retail trade are carried on, freight unloaded and stock of all kinds shipped seven days in the week, some men even cleaning their barnyards and hauling the litter unmolested through the streets in open disregard of the Lord's day. Farmers sow, reap, thresh and haul grain to market the same on Sunday as during the week days.

This spirit of "devil-may-care," "do-as-you-please," "any-how-at-all," "just-so-I-get-ahead," seems to contaminate old and young alike wherever the disease becomes contagious. Little school-boys play marbles for keeps in the shade of the church building, the older ones play match games of baseball on Sunday, while the people—old gray-haired men and women amongst them—gather out to look on.

At one place where I held meetings the Sunday School superintendent left his class to play in the brass band at a Sunday baseball game. God help poor depraved man! Have mercy upon their souls! Sin is an awful thing! A drop of ink gathers on my pen and threatens to blot out the words that come sliding down its point, and just as the word S-I-N is stretching itself out the drop breaks away, making a big ugly blotch on the paper.

It makes me think of blotched brands on doggy calves in the days when it was a part of my business to tie them down and apply the hot iron. And as I look at the blotched word and think of the long ropes

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and hot irons the idea strikes me that doggy calves are not the only victims of the hot mark, nor ropes the only fetters, for some things burn deeper and make more lasting impressions than hot iron on a calf's rib.

There is a spot in every man's make-up more susceptible to impressions than rawhide on a doggy calf, and many times I have thought that both are identified by the hot mark, that there is a branding iron on the man in big hot letters that spell the devil's brand.

When a man brands a calf he starts a fire at a safe distance from the calf, throws him down and burns the brand on the outside where everyone can see it; the first thing, then taking the iron away, he lets the calf go and soon the fire dies out and the iron cools.

But the devil's calves, having only two legs, are branded in a different way. When the devil brands a man he starts the fire in his heart to heat the iron. Then, standing him on his feet, he brands him on the inside where no one can see the brand but Jesus, and throws him down afterward.

The devil never allows his calves to run off nor his iron to cool down. He keeps it sizzling and frying till it has burned clear through to the outside, where it can plainly be seen in great large letters, S-I-N, and the fire keeps on burning hotter and hotter till it becomes an all-consuming, unquenchable fire that will burn on and on into eternity. An evil thought, word or desire may have kindled the fire.

The devil never brands a man at a baseball game, or at an opera, or ball-room, or at a whiskey bar, or gambling-table, but he always brands him before he gets him there by putting temptation in his way, the thought in his mind and the desire in his heart. He just starts a little fire, just a tiny one, but it is always hot enough to heat his irons.

The first wilful step that you take in the wrong direction the devil puts his brand on you. It must be that he took the advantage of you, dogged your steps night and day with temptations, till at last he caught you off your guard, or sleeping when you should have been watching. You allowed him to fan the evil desire into a little flame that heated his iron for the work. Then he made the tiniest little mark, so small at first that no one could see it. He just touched you lightly, softly, gently, found the place on your soul where he could make the easiest impressions, and then applied the hot iron so easily, so gently, that it almost had been a caress. But the step had been taken, the fire kindled, the hot mark made before you were aware of it.

So the fire grew hotter and hotter, and the mark burned deeper and deeper, till at last you felt the hellish fire blazing within you, awakening you up to the fact that the devil had put his brand on you—but it was too late.

You tried to get rid of the hideous mark by endeavoring to overcome the fire, but it was of no use. Then you tried to cover it up, to smother it with your con-

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science, but, like so many others, you forgot to ask God to do the work for you; and so it proved to be a miserable failure.

The time came when the devil began to trip you up and throw you down, and kept on feeding the fire till it burned through everything you could put upon it. Now your will is disabled, your conscience seared, your character destroyed with the hellish fire. It blazes out in so many places that you are a hopeless wreck, and everyone who sees you knows that you are the devil's calf.

Here is a man with a cigar between his teeth, another with a lie on his tongue, another with an oath on his lips, another dragged down by some beastly desire. All these loathsome habits burn their very lives up and destroy both soul and body. All started from a tiny fire—just some little temptation with which the devil snared them.

No matter what profession a man makes or to what church he belongs, if he has sin on him he is a sinner, and he wears the devil's brand, which holds him as his property whether it has burned clear through or not. All the ink in the world cannot blot it out, even if you were to hold him by the heels and dip him in head first. No! no! The devil is too smart for a dodge game. He brands them all on the inside, in a place where ink can't touch if he was drowned in a flood of it, nor the church couldn't wash it away if the preacher were to duck him in a vat of water every day in the week and three times on Sunday, or treat

him to a discourse an hour long three hundred and sixty-five days in the year.

What will you do, then, with the devil's brand? You can't cover it up, your conscience can't smother it, ink won't blot it out, talk won't rub it off, water won't wash it away, nor is there any vent recorded with it, any mark making it of none effect; but there is one thing left for you to do, and only one—that is, to have the blood of Jesus Christ our Saviour applied, which will remove the old sin brand inside and out, and will do it at once and forever if you ask Him in true repentance and faith.

Lord, wash the old sin brand off this man's soul! He has worn it for years, and it has burned deeper and deeper every day till at last it has burned clear through and made a public disgrace of him. Wash it away at once, and do it quickly, or it will burn him up soul and body!

The Lord brands His man, too, after He has washed the last trace of sin off his soul. He writes L-O-V-E in immortal letters that shine with light and glory and grow better every day. He gives him a brand that distinguishes him for gentleness, goodness and love. He brands him not only on the inside but on the outside as well, where everyone can see it and read it and know it at once.

God only gives His man one mark, but that one distinguishes him from a world of sinners. Every sinner, from the least to the greatest, knows that he is God's man, even before he speaks, for they see his brand.

By-and-bye there's going to be a general round-up, and I'll be there, and you'll be there; so will every other saint and sinner, living or dead. Not one will escape or be overlooked, for the Lord of heaven and earth will make the round-up Himself, with all the holy angels. Every angel will work his circle in a chariot of fire, with a glory trumpet that will awaken the dead and bring them forth from their graves on land and sea.

It won't be a round-up for branding, either. It'll be a round-up for dividing the herd—the fat from the lean, the just from the unjust, those who serve God from those who serve the devil. I'll be there with my brand, and you'll be there with yours. It will be a case of the brand *vs.* the man wherever the devil's brand is found.

Where are you, anyhow? Are you ready to meet your God, to greet Him? Are you within a step of heaven, just one little step? Are you where you can shake hands with the angels? Are you where you can talk to God and keep blessed? If you are not, now is your time.

God says, "Come now and let us reason together."
"Now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation."

This is your only chance, your only hope, your only salvation! He will wash the sin brand all away and quench the fire with His own blood.

Come now! He is waiting. We are pleading. The blood is flowing. Will you come?

CHAPTER XIII.

HIGH HORSE RELIGION.

"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me ;
Try my reins and my heart."—*David.*

I SUPPOSE when the Israelites heard that David asked God to examine him and try his reins and his heart that they thought their king had gone out of his mind, and was trying to make a horse out of his religion. They were right about his trying to make a horse out of his religion, but his mind was sound enough. The truth of the matter was that the crooked old devil was trying to beat David out of his salvation, but the clever old king had learned by experience that a religion that couldn't carry him straight through was no good. He made up his mind to strap on his spurs and ride his old religion up to headquarters, get it examined, and the business all fixed up, so that he should have no trouble in proving his title clear. A man's religion, like his horse, must be well proven before we can accept it on recommendation. You never can tell what kind of religion a man has until it is well tested. It takes both God and the devil to test a man's religion and give it the proper recommendation.

The best recommendation a man's religion can

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Roping Calves for Branding on the Prairie.

have is the seal of the Holy Spirit. God has promised to put His seal on everyone who will dare to do His will in spite of the devil and all his fools. This is the only kind of religion that is any value to either God or humanity. Next to a stuffed crow bait, a sham religion is the biggest fake in the world. The only difference between them is that one is stuffed by man while the other is stuffed by the devil. I wouldn't trust a sleek-coated hypocrite any farther than I'd trust a toothless old horse that some professional fakir had stuffed with linseed and bran mash till his hide got loosened up and his coat shining, because you couldn't tell what minute either of them'd leave you in the mud. If there is anything in this world that will carry a man along smoothly and nicely it is true religion and a good horse.

If you wanted to buy a good horse you wouldn't leave the matter of choice to the opinions of other men, for, before making the purchase, you'd want the satisfaction of proving him yourself. You'd put him up against the bit on a high run, just to try his reins and his heart, and to see how he'd swing off under the saddle; and if he were high mettled, had good heart, was well broken to the rein, if his stride was sound and vigorous, then you'd call him a good horse and make arrangements for his purchase at once. Here's a man who wants to prove his religion, and he comes at it in the same way. Some men measure their religion by the opinions of other men, but there was too much sham about this for David.

He wanted to be sure that he had the genuine kind. So he straps on his spurs, rides his old religion up to headquarters, gets down on his knees and says, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me: try my reins and my heart."

When a man comes before God in this spirit and asks Him to examine his religion, he is coming before One who can tell the genuine article from the sham, and if there is anything weak or baulky about it, so that it fails to carry him right through, God is going to let the man know it right on the spot. If he lets God have His way with him, He will burn his old crippled religion at the stake and give him a good sound one in its place.

David said, "Try my reins." He was ready to be guided by the hand of God; or in other words, he wanted a religion that God could manage to suit Himself. When God gets the management of a man's religion there isn't anything weak or lame, or baulky about it, that it should fail to carry him straight through. When a man starts out to buy a horse every horse fakir who hears of him will try to get up a sale. He may try a great many horses, and go to lots of trouble before selecting one. And even then there are so many horse fakirs and fake horses in the world that some day he may dismount to look for his hat, and make you think by the way he pulls himself together and limps home that he has tackled the wrong horse. He will tie him back in the shed out of sight, and, if he is honest no one will ever hear him say another word about his good horse.

But when a man gets a good horse he will do a great deal of talking about him. He will tell you his speed, his style, his staying qualities, etc.; he will talk for hours at a time about his good horse and vouch for his supreme satisfaction by declaring that he has the best horse in the country. This is a good illustration of religion.

When a man starts out to get religion every preacher who hears of him will try to give him a lift. He may try a great many churches and go to lots of trouble before he makes a selection. Even then there are so many religious fakirs and fake religions in the world that some day you may see him looking for his hat, and you may think by the way he pulls himself together and walks home that he has tackled the wrong religion. If he is honest he will put his worthless old religion down cellar and say no more about it.

Some men have so much diplomacy that they can manage almost any kind of religion that comes along, but any man who will go back for a second deal with a sham religion is a greater hypocrite than a professional horse fakir.

A man talks as much about his religion as he does about his best horse, and when he gets the genuine kind of religion—pressed down, shaken together, running over, salted with fire, right from heaven—he will do a great deal of talking about it, too. "Ye are my witnesses."

He will proclaim its merits, its qualities, its substance. He will vouch for his supreme satisfaction by declaring that he has the very best religion in the

world. He will tell how he groaned under conviction; how he repented of his fake religion with a godly sorrow which needed no recourse. He will tell how God had mercy upon him; how He burned his old religion at the stake, and gave him one that brought him joy, peace, happiness and a title to heaven.

People generally are better judges of religion than they are of horses. A man can't live in a neighborhood very long till his neighbors will know more about his religion than they do about his horse, and can tell him how much its weight and its worth to a cent. If it's a poor meagre old religion, that is starved till it is dead on its feet, his neighbors will know it just as well as he does himself. They will call him a mean man and will say just as many mean things about his religion as they will about the meanest old horse in the country.

They will call it a disgrace to the neighborhood, say that they wouldn't give it stable room, set the dogs on it and chase it around from one barnyard to another every time it is turned out to graze, send him word to shut it up and keep it at home or stand consequences by law. They begin to talk as if all Christians were hypocrites just because so many men make a mock of religion. But we can't blame Christianity for everything that men do any more than we can blame God for everything that religion does.

God is not responsible for religion any further than that religion deals out the true gospel of Jesus Christ

and teaches His laws and doctrines. Neither is Christianity responsible for any man's profession any further than that man obeys God's laws and keeps His commandments.

There is only one true religion—that is the heart-born, spirit-filled experience that springs from an active living faith in the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

When a man's life is cropping out all around with hatred, envy, malice, strife, pride, bigotry, love of the world, etc., instead of the beautiful fruitage of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, temperance and faith—it's not the fault of Christianity any more than it is God's fault that men will accept such persons into the Church and call it religion.

I believe that if all the worthless old horses were put into one pasture, and all the hypocrites into another, and the country to take on fire, that God would save the horses first. Who would blame a poor old horse because his neighbor is a miserable hypocrite?

The day is coming when every man's religion will be tested by fire, and if you are not right with God the only way that you will be able to escape the burning pasture is to get right with Him now. Let God have His way with you and He'll burn your worthless old religion at the stake, and will give you another that will carry you through the flames where you won't have a hair singed, or even the smell of smoke on you, like the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace.

Now, if you want to get to headquarters and you've got a worthless old religion with three legs and a blind eye, and you have to leave it at home every time you go to town for fear it will fall down or stick in the mud, and your neighbors haven't got anything better, the best thing for you to do is to leave your worthless old religion behind with them and start off by yourself on foot. You might order a suit of sack-cloth and ashes and strike off down the Valley of Humiliation for a few hundred miles.

They say that there's a nice up-to-date railroad down in the valley now, and you can get a Pullman sleeper at excursion rates. But if you should meet the devil and he should offer you a car-fare and try to get you to make it easy on yourself, just tell him to ride his own excursions, that you are going to hang to the good old foot-path till you come to the place where David met the Lord the time he was seeking religion, and said: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

Then the Lord will examine you, and prove you, and try your reins and your heart. You will then get a genuine religion right from heaven, for God Himself will hand it down to you.

CHAPTER XIV.

COWBOY'S LETTERS AND TID-BITS.

K —, MONTANA, June 4th, —'01.

DEAR BROTHER BRADY, — Well, old man, I've got so much to say that the words stand on end like willows in a sandy bottom, and push my pen along faster than I can string them out. So, I guess I'll send them along in bunches, like asparagus or wheat heads, and let you arrange them to suit yourself.

It's a long time, now, since we hazed brones together or drank coffee out of the same pot. I've been thinkin' lately that maybe yer lonesome for a touch of the old life, and would like to have the same old taste in yer mouth again. I've got a few legs of venison hanging up in my cabin, and plenty of flour, fruit, coffee, and such like.

I'm lonesome for my old pard, so made up my mind that if you'll come back I'll give you a hand interest in my ranch and stock.

There are over fifty head of horses wearin' my brand now, and some of them are fairly wild to feel the tickle of yer spurs.

I don't care 'bout rowlin' them myself, but I'll give you half of them just for the fun of seeing you there fannin' them with yer hat.

It's my 'pinion that you're out of yer place when you're out of the saddle, 'cause I believe you could make a better job of tamin' a wild bronc any day than you can preachin'. Did you say that you could ride the devil without saddle or spurs? Well, I reckon, if you can you ain't forgot how to ride yet, 'cause it's my 'pinion that he can hit the ground more times in a minute and put more kinks in his jumps than any outlaw horse in Montana.

I'll tell you, old boy, if you ever tackle him bare-backed you'll wish you were where you could pull a little leather to keep somethin' between you and the earth.

Do you have to give him a round every day to keep him where you can manage him? Or do you get a "lay-off" once in a while to rest your bones?

I wish that you could fix things up so that I could stand the same show with him. He does me up every day.

Well, old man, I mean business. Just say you'll come, and I'll dig you up a check right away. Good bye. From

BROTHER WALTER.

GRAND FORKS, N. DAK., June 12th, '02.

Dear Brother Walter,—I reckon it is my turn to try a hand at the pen.

Your last letter got so close to me in several places that it has left a few sore spots to feel of me as I write.

I was pretty hungry for a letter from you, so yer "wheat heads" and "asparagus" came in handy. Yes, those were good old days when we hazed brones together. I often think of the times when we ate flapjacks and meat from the same frying-pan, and drank coffee from the same pot. The same old taste is in my mouth, and I feel just as much as ever like trying my teeth on a leg of that venison in yer cabin.

No, I'm not lonesome for a touch of the old life at all, 'cause God took my saddle and spurs away when He started me out to preach, and I've never felt like askin' Him to give them back.

You say that you'd give me a share in yer ranch and half interest in yer bunch of brones just for the fun of seein' me up there fannin' them with my hat while they are puttin' in their sundips or doublin' back on some of their kinky jumps.

Well, I'm lonesome for a visit with my old pard. Some day I'm comin' back to see you, but I don't want yer ranch or brones, 'cause I'm called to preach, and I'd be a pretty cheap preacher if you could buy me with a half interest in fifty horses and a bad land ranch.

You say I'd look better tamin' a wild brone any day than I would preachin' the gospel. You speak of the devil as if you thought he was some old outlaw horse that had thrown every man in the country, and would run a blazer on a feller or chase him over the kraal fence every time that he came near him, and that

you'd like to see me ride him barebacked. Well, I've never stuck my spurs in his shoulder yet, nor bounced my quirt off his old pate, 'cause I didn't handle the devil that way. There was a time when I thought a great deal as you do. I used to think if he got a jump or so on me that I'd be doin' pretty well to keep anythin' between me and the earth.

He used to run a blazer on me quite often, too, but since I put on the whole armor of God and have taken the Sword of the Spirit, whenever the devil comes tearing up camp I take a slash at him and generally bring away a hunk somewhere. I keep right at him every day. You said that you'd like the same show with him. Well, God has a full armory and plenty of swords. If you send in your measure and pay the price, He'll fit you out from top to toe, and give you a sword that the devil will be afraid to smell of.

You had better send in yer order right away, and yer ranch and horses won't worry you quite so much.

Yer check may come in handy at payin' a car-fare to some of our gospel meetin's.

Well, old man, good-bye. From

BROTHER BRADY.

Jack (to the crowd)—“Boys, behold our father-in-law from heaven.”

Brady (passing by)—“Too far away, boys. God doesn't own such distant relatives. Better be a brother or a son.”

Preacher (with sarcasm)—"Come down and I'll convince you that you're wrong."

Brady—"Why not do it right here?"

Preacher—"Because we speak from a chart, and it's down home."

Brady—"I'm always sorry for a preacher who gets so far from God that he's got to go home for a chart."

Preacher—"We believe in doing things right."

Brady—"Good! Let's pray that you don't get lost going for the chart."

Harry—"What's your business?"

Brady—"I'm a preacher."

Harry—"Hum! I used to be a preacher, too, but I used to preach a lot of lies."

Brady—"If that's the case I guess that you're not through preachin' yet."

Harry—"Well, if I couldn't preach any better than you do I wouldn't make a fool of myself tryin', anyhow."

Brady—"Yes, but yer confession has given me a tremendous advantage."

Harry—"How's that?"

Brady—"It's better to be a fool for God than a fool for the devil, because God's fools have sense enough to tell the truth."

TESTIMONY.

"I'm saved from the crown of my hat to my horse's heels—head, heart, pocket-book, testimony

and all. I've left the devil's bad lands with their blowouts and corkscrew trails, and I'm away out across the old Jordan ford in good old Canaan Land, where there is nothing but sunshine between me and glory. God's love is burning in my heart day and night, and he leads me all the way. I've got a religion that takes all the kinks out of the trail at a jump, and hits a bee-line for heaven on a fresh horse. I'm on a high lope. Glory to God ! ”

CHAPTER XV.

ACROSS THE BIG DIVIDE.

I'M ridin' with royal permission,
And out on the round-up to stay ;
I'm after the maverick and dogy,
And spreadin' my rope for the stray.
Although you have busted your hobbles,
Or pulled up the old picket pin,
And quit the Plain Trail to glory
To graze in the Blowouts of sin,
Back to the Plain Trail I'll haze you,
Where the Master will deal out a ride
That hits a bee-line for the Home Ranch
Across the Big Divide.

No, you need not carry a grub-stake ;
Provision for you He has made
By waters still and through pastures green,
Where the trail is sheltered with shade.
For the round-up boss is our Saviour,
And He close guards the trail for all,
And pampers the poor stray and dogy,
Or maverick, that lists to my call.
And a range replete with plenty,
Cheered by love that no ills can betide,
Waits to greet you up at the Home Ranch
Across the Big Divide.

The Master is calling for riders
To help gather the scattered herd ;

For sinners are numbered by legions
Who stray from the light of His word.
You had better strike for the outfit
And turn in with the Master's brand,
For no one else can follow the trail
That leads up to the Holy Land.
Apply at once to Headquarters,
Send your name on ahead for the ride,
And He'll lead the trail to the Home Ranch
Across the Big Divide.

The Master still calls for us, comrades ;
Tis time to prepare for the ride ;
He's leading a round-up for Glory,
To cut out the sin and the pride.
He's promised each cowboy a circle
Who'll split up the bad lands of sin,
And route the whole country for Jesus,
To bring every wanderer in.
A bright golden range in Glory,
And a Home Ranch and mansion beside,
Wait all who will ride for King Jesus
Across the Big Divide.

The safe-looking trails are so many
In this wild, degenerate day,
If you should go looking for landmarks
You'd stray in the bad lands to stay.
So just split the breeze for the Plain one,
As the Master has told you to do ;
It heads all the canyons and washouts,
And splits the old blowouts in two.
Take orders from none but King Jesus ;
He has promised to keep at our side,
And lead all the way to the Home Ranch
Across the Big Divide.

Don't fall in the Gulf of Temptation,
But leap every one, wide and clear,
As often you've jumped the old washouts
Behind some wild bad land steer,
And when the fierce tempest would drift you,
If you feel that your strength is frail,
Take shelter behind some good wind-brake
The Master provides without fail.
He will stay with all His vouchers,
On which you have surely relied,
And redeem them all at the Home Branch
Across the Big Divide.

For God has not made His promises
Just to favor a pampered few ;
While He's after the big fat range steer,
He wants poor little doggy, too.
When both are held on the golden range
Till their shining coats roll with fat,
What if they grazed on the Yellowstone
Or were reared on the salt-sage flat !
So, come boys, tie down these precepts,
And no doubting or letting them slide,
And you'll wind up at the Home Branch
Across the Big Divide.